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VOLUME 33.

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IDLER.

N° 1—103.

" Duplex libelli dos est, quod risum movet,
" Et quod prudenti vitam consilio monet."

PHÆDRUS.

Χάρις μικροῖσι.

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HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL

PREFACE

TO

THE IDLER.

THIS work was written by Dr. Johnson for "The Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette," projected in the year 1758, by Mr. J. Newbery, Bookseller. The Preface to the *Rambler* contains an outline of the Life of the celebrated author of these papers; we shall therefore here only present our readers with a few observations on the style, &c. of Dr. Johnson, which he will not find so copiously described as we could wish in our preliminary observations on the *Rambler*.

The Doctor is said to have been allowed a share in the profits of this newspaper, for which

he was to furnish a short essay on such subjects as might suit the taste of the times, and distinguish this publication from its contemporaries. The first Essay appeared on Saturday, April 15th, 1758, and continued to be published on the same day, weekly, until April 5th, 1760, when the IDLER was concluded.

The *Rambler* may be considered as Johnson's great work. It was the basis of that high reputation which went on increasing to the end of his days. The circulation of those periodical essays was not, at first, equal to their merit. They had not, like the Spectators, the art of charming by variety; and indeed how could it be expected? The wits of Queen Anne's reign sent their contributions to the *Spectator;* and Johnson stood alone. A stage-coach, says Sir Richard Steele, must go forward on stated days, whether there are passengers or not. So it was with the *Rambler*, every Tuesday and Saturday, for two years. In this collection Johnson is the great moral teacher of his countrymen; his essays form a body of ethics; the observations on life and manners are acute and instructive; and the papers, professedly critical, serve to promote the cause of literature. It must, however, be acknowledged, that a

settled gloom hangs over the author's mind; and all the essays, except eight or ten, coming from the same fountain head, no wonder that they have the raciness of the soil from which they sprung. Of this uniformity Johnson was sensible, He used to say, that if he had joined a friend or two, who would have been able to intermix papers of a sprightly turn, the collection would have been more miscellaneous, and, by consequence, more agreeable to the generality of readers.

It is remarkable, that the pomp of diction, which has been objected to Johnson, was first assumed in the *Rambler*. His Dictionary was going on at the same time, and, in the course of that work, as he grew familiar with technical and scholastic words, he thought the bulk of his readers were equally learned; or at least would admire the splendour and dignity of the style. And yet it is well known, that he praised in Cowley the ease and unaffected structure of the sentences. Cowley may be placed at the head of those who cultivated a clear and natural style. Dryden, Tillotson, and Sir William Temple, followed. Addison, Swift, and Pope, with more correctness, carried our language well nigh to perfection. Of Addison, Johnson

was used to say, *He is the Raphael of Essay Writers.* How he differed so widely from such elegant models is a problem not to be solved, unless it be true that he took an early tincture from the writers of the last century, particularly Sir Thomas Browne. Hence the peculiarities of his style, new combinations, sentences of an unusual structure, and words derived from the learned languages. His own account of the matter is, "When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas." But he forgot the observation of Dryden: *If too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed, not to assist the natives, but to conquer them.* There is, it must be admitted, a swell of language, often out of all proportion to the sentiment; but there is, in general, a fulness of mind, and the thought seems to expand with the sound of the words. Determined to discard colloquial barbarisms and licentious idioms, he forgot the elegant simplicity that distinguishes the writings of Addison. He had what Locke calls a round-about view of his subject; and, though he was never tainted, like many modern wits, with

the ambition of shining in paradox, he may be fairly called an ORIGINAL THINKER. His reading was extensive. He treasured in his mind whatever was worthy of notice, but he added to it from his own meditation. He collected, *quæ reconderet, auctaque promeret.* Addison was not so profound a thinker. He was *born to write, converse, and live with ease;* and he found an early patron in Lord Somers. He depended, however, more upon a fine taste than the vigour of his mind. His Latin Poetry shews, that he relished, with a just selection, all the refined and delicate beauties of the Roman classics; and when he cultivated his native language, no wonder that he formed that graceful style, which has been so justly admired; simple, yet elegant; adorned, yet never over-wrought; rich in allusion, yet pure and perspicuous; correct without labour, and, though sometimes deficient in strength, yet always musical. His essays, in general, are on the surface of life; if ever original, it was in pieces of humour. Sir Roger de Coverley, and the Tory Fox-hunter, need not be mentioned. Johnson had a fund of humour, but he did not know it, nor was he willing to descend to the familiar idiom and the variety of diction

which that mode of composition required. The letter, in the *Rambler*, N° 12, from a young girl that wants a place, will illustrate this observation. Addison possessed an unclouded imagination, alive to the first objects of nature and of art. He reaches the sublime without any apparent effort. When he tells us, "If we consider the fixed stars as so many oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets; if we still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk further in those unfathomable depths of æther, we are lost in a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the magnificence and immensity of nature;" the ease, with which this passage rises to unaffected grandeur, is the secret charm that captivates the reader. Johnson is always lofty; he seems, to use Dryden's phrase, to be o'er-inform'd with meaning, and his words do not appear to himself adequate to his conception. He moves in state, and his periods are always harmonious. His Oriental Tales are in the true style of Eastern magnificence, and yet none of them are so much admired as the Visions of Mirza. In matters of criticism, Johnson is never the echo of preceding writers. He thinks and decides for him-

self. If we except the Essays on the Pleasures of Imagination, Addison cannot be called a philosophical critic. His moral Essays are beautiful; but in that province nothing can exceed the *Rambler*, though Johnson used to say, that the Essay on *The Burthens of Mankind* (in the *Spectator*, N° 558) was the most exquisite he had ever read. Talking of himself, Johnson said, "Topham Beauclerk has wit, and every thing comes from him with ease; but when I say a good thing, I seem to labour." When we compare him with Addison, the contrast is still stronger. Addison lends grace and ornament to truth; Johnson gives it force and energy. Addison makes virtue amiable; Johnson represents it as an awful duty. Addison insinuates himself with an air of modesty; Johnson commands like a dictator; but a dictator in his splendid robes, not labouring at the plough. Addison is the Jupiter of Virgil, with placid serenity talking to Venus:

"Vultu, quo cœlum tempestatesque serenat."

Johnson is JUPITER TONANS: he darts his lightning, and rolls his thunder, in the cause of virtue and piety. The language seems to

fall short of his ideas; he pours along, familiarising the terms of philosophy, with bold inversions, and sonorous periods; but we may apply to him what Pope has said of Homer: "It is the sentiment that swells and fills out the diction, which rises with it, and forms itself about it; like glass in the furnace, which grows to a greater magnitude, as the breath within is more powerful, and the heat more intense."

It is not the design of this comparison to decide between those two eminent writers. In matters of taste every reader will choose for himself. Johnson is always profound, and of course gives the fatigue of thinking. Addison charms while he instructs; and writing, as he always does, a pure, an elegant, and idiomatic style, he may be pronounced the safest model for imitation.

The Essays written by Johnson in the *Adventurer* may be called a continuation of the *Rambler*. The IDLER, in order to be consistent with the assumed character, is written with abated vigour, in a style of ease and unlaboured elegance. It is the Odyssey after the Iliad. Intense thinking would not become the IDLER. The first number presents a well-drawn por-

trait of an Idler, and from that character no deviation could be made. Accordingly, Johnson forgets his austere manner, and plays us into sense. He still continues his lectures on human life, but he adverts to common occurrences, and is often content with the topic of the day. An advertisement in the beginning of the first volume informs us, that twelve entire Essays were a contribution from different hands. One of these, N° 33, is the journal of a Senior Fellow at Cambridge, but, as Johnson, being himself an orignal thinker, always revolted from servile imitation, he has printed the piece, with an apology, importing that the journal of a citizen in the *Spectator* almost precluded the attempt of any subsequent writer. This account of the IDLER may be closed, after observing, that the author's mother being buried on the 23d of January 1759, there is an admirable paper, occasioned by that event, on Saturday the 27th of the same month, N° 41. The reader, if he pleases, may compare it with another fine paper in the *Rambler*, N° 54, on the conviction that rushes on the mind at the bed of a dying friend.

The IDLERS, during the time of their publication, were frequently copied into contempo-

rary works, without any acknowledgment. The author, who was also a proprietor of the Universal Chronicle, in which they appeared, hurled his vengeance on the pirates in the following "Hue and Cry," which, as coming from Dr. JOHNSON's pen, may justly be deemed a literary curiosity.

"London, Jan. 5, 1759. ADVERTISEMENT. The proprietors of the paper, entitled "The Idler," having found that those essays are inserted in the newspapers and magazines with so little regard to justice or decency, that the Universal Chronicle, in which they first appear, is not always mentioned, think it necessary to declare to the publishers of those collections, that however patiently they have hitherto endured these injuries, made yet more injurious by contempt, they have now determined to endure them no longer. They have already seen essays, for which a very large price is paid, transferred with the most shameless rapacity into the weekly or monthly compilations, and their right, at least for the present, alienated from them, before they could themselves be said to enjoy it. But they would not willingly be thought to want tenderness even for men by whom no tenderness hath been shewn. The past is without remedy, and shall be without resentment. But

those who have been thus busy with their sickles in the fields of their neighbours, are henceforward to take notice, that the time of impunity is at an end. Whoever shall, without our leave, lay the hand of rapine upon our papers, is to expect that we shall vindicate our due, by the means which justice prescribes, and which are warranted by the immemorial prescriptions of honourable trade. We shall lay hold, in our turn, on their copies, degrade them from the pomp of wide margin and diffuse typography, contract them into a narrow space, and sell them at an humble price; yet not with a view of growing rich by confiscations, for we think not much better of money got by punishment than by crimes: we shall, therefore, when our losses are repaid, give what profit shall remain to the Magdalens: for we know not who can be more properly taxed for the support of penitent prostitutes than prostitutes in whom there yet appears neither penitence nor shame."——

The effect of this singular manifesto is not now known; but if "essays for which a large price has been paid" be not words of course, they may prove that the author received an immediate remuneration for his labour, independent of his share in the general profits.

Nos 33, 93, and 96, were written by Mr. Thomas Warton. Thomas Warton was the younger brother of Dr. Joseph Warton, and was born at Basingstoke in 1728. He very early manifested a taste for verse; and there is extant a well-turned translation of an epigram of Martial composed by him in his ninth year. He was educated under his father, who kept a school at Basingstoke, till he was admitted in 1743 a commoner of Trinity College, Oxford. Here he exercised his poetical talent to so much advantage, that on the appearance of Mason's Elegy of "Isis," which severely reflected on the disloyalty of Oxford at that period, he was encouraged by Dr. Huddesford, president of his college, to vindicate the cause of the university. This task he performed with great applause by writing, in his 21st year, "The Triumph of Isis;" a piece of much spirit and fancy, in which he retaliated upon the bard of Cam by satirising the courtly venality then supposed to distinguish the loyal university, and sung in no common strains the past and present glories of Oxford. This on his part was fair warfare, though as a peace-offering he afterwards excluded the poem from his volume of collected pieces. His "Progress of Dis-

content," published in 1750 in a miscellany entitled the Student, exhibited to great advantage his powers in the familiar style, and his talent for humour, with a knowledge of life extraordinary at his early age, especially if composed, as is said, for a college-exercise in 1746. In 1750 he took the degree of M.A., and in the following year became a Fellow of his college. He appears now to have unalterably devoted himself to the pursuit of poetry and elegant literature in an university-residence. His spirited satire, entitled "Newmarket," and pointed against the ruinous passion for the turf; his Ode for Music; and Verses on the Death of the Prince of Wales; were written about this time; and in 1753 he was the editor of a small collection of poems, which, under the title of "The Union," was printed at Edinburgh, and contained several of his own pieces. In 1754 he made himself known as a critic and a diligent student of poetical antiquities, by his observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen, in one volume, afterwards enlarged to two volumes; a work well received by the public, and which made a considerable addition to his literary reputation. These various proofs of his abilities caused him very properly to be elected in 1757

professor of poetry to the university, an office which he held for the usual period of ten years, and rendered respectable by the erudition and taste displayed in his lectures. Dr. Johnson was at this time publishing his "Idler," and Warton, who had long been intimately acquainted with him, contributed the three papers we have mentioned to that work. He gave a specimen of his classical proficiency in 1758 by the publication of "Inscriptionum Romanarum Metricarum Delectus," a collection of select Latin epigrams and inscriptions, to which were annexed a few modern ones, on the antique model, five of them by himself. He drew up in 1760, for the Biographica Britannica, the life of Sir Thomas Pope, which he published separately, much enlarged, in 1772 and 1780. Another contribution to literary biography was his "Life and literary Remains of Dr. Bathurst," published in 1761. A piece of local humour, which was read at the time with great avidity, dropped from his pen in 1760, with the title, "A Companion to the Guide, and a Guide to the Companion; being a complete Supplement to all the Accounts of Oxford hitherto published." The lapse of time, and the new reign, had now entirely restored to Oxford its ancient

virtue of loyalty; and Warton, who had lamented the death of George II. in a copy of verses addressed to Mr. Pitt, continued the courtly strain, though with due dignity, in lines on the marriage of George III. and on the birth of the Prince of Wales, printed in the university collection. Still ranking equally with the wits and with the poets of Isis, he edited in 1764 the "Oxford Sausage," of several pieces in which lively miscellany he was the writer. In 1766 he again appeared as a classical editor by superintending the Anthology of Cephalus, printed at the Clarendon-press, to which he prefixed a learned and ingenious preface. He took the degree of B. D. in 1761, and in 1771 was instituted to the small living of Kiddington in Oxfordshire, on the presentation of the Earl of Litchfield, then chancellor of the university. An edition of Theocritus in 2 vols. 4to. which was published in 1770, gave him celebrity not only at home, but among the scholars of the continent.

A History of English Poetry is said to have been meditated by Pope, who was but indifferently qualified by learning, whatever he might have been by taste, for such an undertaking. Gray, who possessed every requisite

for the work, except industry, entertained a distant idea of engaging in it, with the assistance of Mason; but he shrunk from the magnitude of the task, and readily relinquished his project, when he heard that a similar design was adopted by Warton. At what period he first occupied himself in this extensive plan of writing and research, we are not informed; but in 1774 he had proceeded so far as to publish the first volume in 4to.; and he pursued an object, now apparently become the great mark of his studies, with so much assiduity, that he brought out a second volume in 1778, and a third in 1781. He now relaxed in his labours, and never executed more than a few sheets of a fourth volume. The work had grown upon his hands, and had greatly exceeded his first estimate; so that the completion of the design, which was to have terminated only with the commencement of the 18th century, was still very remote, supposing a due proportion to have been preserved throughout. Warton's "History of English Poetry" is regarded as his opus magnum; and is indeed an ample monument of his reading, as well as of his taste and critical judgment. The majority of its readers, how-

ever, will probably be of opinion that he has dwelt too minutely upon those early periods in which poetry can scarcely be said to have existed in this country, and has been too profuse of transcripts from pieces destitute of all merit but their age. Considered, however, as literary antiquarianism, the work is very interesting; and though inaccuracies have been detected, it cannot be denied to abound with curious information. His brother gave some expectation of carrying on the history to the completion of the fourth volume, but seems to have done little or nothing towards fulfilling it. As a proof that Warton began to be weary of his task, it appears that about 1781 he had turned his thoughts to another laborious undertaking, which was a county-history of Oxfordshire; and in 1782 he published as a specimen a topographical account of his parish of Kiddington. In the same year he entered into the celebrated Chattertonian controversy, and published An Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Rowley, which he decidedly pronounced to be the fabrication of their pretended editor. His income was augmented in this year by presentation to a donative in Somersetshire; and as he

was free both from ambition and avarice, he seems to have looked no farther for ecclesiastical promotion. In 1785 the place of Camden-professor of history at Oxford, vacant by the resignation of the present Sir W. Scott, was conferred upon him. He attended to his duties so far as to deliver a learned and ingenious inaugural lecture, but that was the limit of his professorial exertions. Another office at this time demanded new efforts. At his Majesty's express desire the post of Poet-laureat, vacated by the death of Whitehead, was offered to him; and, in accepting it, he laudably resolved to use his best endeavours for rendering it respectable. He varied the monotony of anniversary court compliment by retrospective views of the splendid period of English history and the glories of chivalry, and by other topics adapted to poetical description, though little connected with the proper theme of the day; and though his lyric strains underwent some ridicule on that account, they in general enhanced the literary valuation of laureat odes. His concluding publication was an edition of the juvenile poems of Milton, in which it was his purpose to explain his allusions, point out his imitations, illustrate his beauties, and eluci-

date his obsolete diction and peculiar phraseology. This was a task of no great effort to one qualified like Warton; and engaging in it, rather than in the completion of his elaborate plans, seems to prove that the indolence of advancing years and a collegiate life was gaining upon him. Of this work the first edition appeared in 1785, and the second in 1791, a short time before his death. He had intended to include in his plan a similar edition of the Paradise Regained, and the Samson Agonistes, of the great author, of whom, notwithstanding religious and political differences, he was a warm admirer; and he left notes on both these pieces. But his constitution now began to give way, though the period of old age was yet distant. In his 62d year an attack of the gout shattered his frame, and was succeeded, in May 1790, by a paralytic seizure, which carried him off at his lodgings in Oxford. His remains were interred, with every academical honour, in the chapel of Trinity College.

The character of Thomas Warton was marked by some of those peculiarities which commonly fix upon a man the appellation of an humourist; and a variety of stories current among the collegians shew that he was more in-

tent upon gratifying his own habitual tastes, than regardful of the usual modes and decorums of society. But he was substantially good-humoured, friendly, and placid; and if his dislike of form and restraint sometimes made him prefer the company of inferiors to that of equals, the choice was probably in some measure connected with that love of nature, and spirit of independence, which may be discerned in his writings. That he employed a large portion of his time in the cultivation of his mind by curious and elegant literature, his various productions abundantly testify; yet he appears to have wanted the resolution and steady industry necessary for the completion of a great design; and some remarkable instances of inaccuracy or forgetfulness prove that his exertions were rather desultory than regular. This disposition was less injurious to him in his poetical capacity than in any other, whence he will probably live longest in fame as a poet. Scarcely any one of that tribe has noted with finer observation the minute circumstances in rural nature that afford pleasure in description, or has derived from the regions of fiction more animated and picturesque scenery. His pieces are very various in subject, and none of them

long. He can only rank among the minor poets; but perhaps few volumes in that class will more frequently be taken up for real amusement. Several editions of his poems were called for in his life-time, and since his death an edition of his works has been given by Mr. Mant, in 2 vols. octavo, 1802, with a biographical account of the author prefixed.

When Mr. Warton wrote his three papers in the *Idler*, he lived in habits of intimacy and correspondence with Dr. Johnson: he was likewise a member of the Literary Club, and made occasional journeys to London, to attend that, and to enjoy the pleasure of Sir Joshua Reynolds' company, of whom some notice is now to be taken as writer of the Essays N°s 76, 79, and 82, in this work.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was the son of a clergyman at Plympton, in Devonshire, and born there in 1723. Being intended for the church, he received a suitable education under his father, and then removed to Oxford, where he took his degrees in arts; but having a great taste for drawing, he resolved to make painting his profession, and accordingly was placed under Hudson the portrait painter. About 1749 he went to Italy, in company with the honour-

able Mr. Keppel, his early friend and patron. After studying the works of the most illustrious masters two years, Mr. Reynolds returned to London, where he found no encouragement given to any other branch of the art than to portrait painting. He was of course under the necessity of complying with the prevailing taste, and in that walk soon became unrivalled. The first picture by which he distinguished himself, after his return, was the portrait of Mr. Keppel. He did not, however, confine himself to portraits, but painted several historical pictures of high and acknowledged merit. When the royal academy was instituted he was appointed president, which station he held with honour to himself and advantage to the arts till 1791, and then resigned it. He was also appointed principal painter to the king, and knighted. His literary merits, and other accomplishments, procured him the friendship of the most distinguished men of genius in his time, particularly Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, and Garrick: and Sir Joshua had the honour of instituting the literary club, of which they were members. He was likewise a member of the royal society, and of that of antiquaries; and was created doctor of laws by the universities

of Oxford and Dublin. Sir Joshua's academical discourses display the soundest judgment, the most refined taste, and a perfect acquaintance with the works of different masters; and are written in a clear and elegant style. He died in 1792, and lies buried in St. Paul's cathedral. Having no children, he bequeathed the principal part of his property to his niece, since married to the Earl of Inchiquin, now Marquis of Thomond.

We shall conclude our sketch of the life of this illustrious artist, by quoting his opinion of Dr. Johnson, which is equally honourable to himself and his friend. Speaking of his own discourses, our great artist says, "Whatever merit they have must be imputed, in a great measure, to the education which I may be said to have had under Dr. Johnson. I do not mean to say, though it certainly would be to the credit of these discourses if I could say it with truth, that he contributed even a single sentiment to them: but he qualified my mind to think justly. No man had, like him, the faculty of teaching inferior minds the art of thinking. Perhaps other men might have equal knowledge, but few were so communicative. His great pleasure was to talk to those who looked up to him. It was

here he exhibited his wonderful powers. In mixed company, and frequently in company that *ought* to have looked up to him, many, thinking they had a character for learning to support, considered it as beneath them to enlist in the train of his auditors: and to such persons he certainly did not appear to advantage, being often impetuous and overbearing. The desire of shining in conversation was in him indeed a predominant passion; and if it must be attributed to vanity, let it at the same time be recollected, that it produced that loquaciousness from which his more intimate friends derived considerable advantage. The observations which he made on poetry, on life, and on every thing about us, I applied to our art, with what success others must judge."

N° 67 was written by another intimate and affectionate friend of Dr. Johnson's, BENNET LANGTON, Esq. of Langton, in Lincolnshire. His acquaintance with Dr. Johnson commenced soon after the conclusion of the *Rambler*, which Mr. Langton, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that Mr. BOSWELL says he came to London chiefly with a view of being introduced to its author. Mr. Langton died December the 18th, 1801.

THE IDLER.

N° 1. SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1758.

Vacui sub umbra
Lusimus.

HOR.

THOSE who attempt periodical essays seem to be often stopped in the beginning by the difficulty of finding a proper title. Two writers, since the time of the *Spectator*, have assumed his name, without any pretensions to lawful inheritance; an effort was once made to revive the *Tatler;* and the strange appellations, by which other papers have been called, show that the authors were distressed, like the natives of *America*, who come to the *Europeans* to beg a name.

It will be easily believed of the *Idler*, that if his title had required any search, he never would have found it. Every mode of life has its conveniences. The *Idler*, who habituates himself to be satisfied with what he can most easily obtain, not only escapes labours which are often fruitless, but sometimes succeeds better than those who despise all that is within their reach, and think every thing more valuable as it is harder to be acquired.

If similitude of manners be a motive to kindness, the *Idler* may flatter himself with universal patronage. There is no single character under which such numbers are comprised. Every man is, or hopes to be, an *Idler*. Even those who seem to differ most from us are hastening to increase our fraternity; as peace is the end of war, so to be idle is the ultimate purpose of the busy.

There is, perhaps, no appellation by which a writer can better denote his kindred to the human species. It has been found hard to describe man by an adequate definition. Some philosophers have called him a reasonable animal; but others have considered reason as a quality of which many creatures partake. He has been termed, likewise, a laughing animal; but it is said that some men have never laughed. Perhaps man may be more properly distinguished as an idle animal; for there is no man who is not sometimes idle. It is at least a definition from which none that shall find it in this paper can be excepted; for who can be more idle than the reader of the *Idler?*

That the definition may be complete, idleness must be not only the general, but the peculiar characteristic of man; and, perhaps, man is the only being that can properly be called idle, that does by others what he might do himself, or sacrifices duty or pleasure to the love of ease.

Scarcely any name can be imagined from which less envy or competition is to be dreaded. The *Idler* has no rivals or enemies. The man of business forgets him; the man of enterprise despises him; and though such as tread the same track of life fall commonly into jealousy and discord, *Idlers* are always found to associate in peace; and he who is most famed for doing nothing, is glad to meet another as idle as himself.

What is to be expected from this paper, whether it will be uniform or various, learned or familiar, serious or gay, political or moral, continued or interrupted, it is hoped that no reader will inquire. That the *Idler* has some scheme, cannot be doubted; for to form schemes is the *Idler*'s privilege. But though he has many projects in his head, he is now grown sparing of communication, having observed, that his hearers are apt to remember what he forgets himself; that his tardiness of execution exposes him to the encroachments of those who catch a hint and fall to work; and that very specious plans, after long contrivance and pompous displays, have subsided in weariness without a trial, and without miscarriage have been blasted by derision.

Something the *Idler*'s character may be supposed to promise. Those that are curious after diminutive history, who watch the revolutions of families, and the rise and fall of characters either male or female, will hope to be gratified by this paper; for the *Idler* is always inquisitive and seldom retentive. He that delights in obloquy and satire, and wishes to see clouds gathering over any reputation that dazzles him with its brightness, will snatch up the *Idler*'s essays with a beating heart. The *Idler* is naturally censorious; those who attempt nothing themselves, think every thing easily performed, and consider the unsuccessful always as criminal.

I think it necessary to give notice, that I make no contract, nor incur any obligation. If those who depend on the *Idler* for intelligence and entertainment, should suffer the disappointment which commonly follows ill-placed expectations, they are to lay the blame only on themselves.

Yet hope is not wholly to be cast away. The *Idler*, though sluggish, is yet alive, and may sometimes be stimulated to vigour and activity. He may

descend into profoundness, or tower into sublimity; for the diligence of an *Idler* is rapid and impetuous, as ponderous bodies forced into velocity move with violence proportionate to their weight.

But these vehement exertions of intellect cannot be frequent, and he will therefore gladly receive help from any correspondent, who shall enable him to please without his own labour. He excludes no style, he prohibits no subject; only let him that writes to the *Idler* remember, that his letters must not be long; no words are to be squandered in declaration of esteem, or confessions of inability; conscious dulness has little right to be prolix, and praise is not so welcome to the *Idler* as quiet.

N° 2. SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1758.

Toto vix quater anno
Membranam. HOR.

MANY positions are often on the tongue, and seldom in the mind; there are many truths which every human being acknowledges and forgets. It is generally known, that he who expects much will be often disappointed; yet disappointment seldom cures us of expectation, or has any other effect than that of producing a moral sentence, or peevish exclamation. He that embarks in the voyage of life, will always wish to advance rather by the impulse of the wind, than the strokes of the oar; and many founder in the passage, while they lie waiting for the gale that is to waft them to their wish.

It will naturally be suspected that the *Idler* has lately suffered some disappointment, and that he does not talk thus gravely for nothing. No man is required to betray his own secrets. I will, however, confess, that I have now been a writer almost a week, and have not yet heard a single word of praise, nor received one hint from any correspondent.

Whence this negligence proceeds I am not able to discover. Many of my predecessors have thought themselves obliged to return their acknowledgments in the second paper, for the kind reception of the first; and in a short time apologies have become necessary to those ingenious gentlemen and ladies whose performances, though in the highest degree elegant and learned, have been unavoidably delayed.

What then will be thought of me, who, having experienced no kindness, have no thanks to return; whom no gentleman or lady has yet enabled to give any cause of discontent, and who have, therefore, no opportunity of showing how skilfully I can pacify resentment, extenuate negligence, or palliate rejection?

I have long known that splendor of reputation is not to be counted among the necessaries of life, and therefore shall not much repine if praise be withheld till it is better deserved. But surely I may be allowed to complain that, in a nation of authors, not one has thought me worthy of notice after so fair an invitation.

At the time when the rage of writing had seized the old and the young, when the cook warbles her lyrics in the kitchen, and the thrasher vociferates his heroics in the barn; when our traders deal out knowledge in bulky volumes, and our girls forsake their samplers to teach kingdoms wisdom, it may seem very unnecessary to draw any more from their

proper occupations, by affording new opportunities of literary fame.

I should be, indeed, unwilling to find that, for the sake of corresponding with the *Idler*, the smith's iron had cooled on the anvil, or the spinster's distaff stood unemployed. I solicit only the contributions of those who have already devoted themselves to literature, or, without any determinate intention, wander at large through the expanse of life, and wear out the day in hearing at one place what they utter at another.

Of these, a great part are already writers. One has a friend in the country upon whom he exercises his powers; whose passions he raises and depresses; whose understanding he perplexes with paradoxes, or strengthens by argument; whose admiration he courts, whose praises he enjoys; and who serves him instead of a senate or a theatre; as the young soldiers in the *Roman* camp learned the use of their weapons by fencing against a post in the place of an enemy.

Another has his pockets filled with essays and epigrams, which he reads from house to house, to select parties, and which his acquaintances are daily entreating him to withhold no longer from the impatience of the public.

If among these any one is persuaded that, by such preludes of composition, he has qualified himself to appear in the open world, and is yet afraid of those censures which they who have already written, and they who cannot write, are equally ready to fulminate against public pretenders to fame, he may, by transmitting his performances to the *Idler*, make a cheap experiment of his abilities, and enjoy the pleasure of success, without the hazard of miscarriage.

Many advantages not generally known arise from this method of stealing on the public. The standing

author of the paper is always the object of critical malignity. Whatever is mean will be imputed to him, and whatever is excellent be ascribed to his assistants. It does not much alter the event, that the author and his correspondents are equally unknown; for the author, whoever he be, is an individual, of whom every reader has some fixed idea, and whom he is, therefore, unwilling to gratify with applause; but the praises given to his correspondents are scattered in the air, none can tell on whom they will light, and therefore none are unwilling to bestow them.

He that is known to contribute to a periodical work, needs no other caution than not to tell what particular pieces are his own; such secrecy is, indeed, very difficult; but if it can be maintained, it is scarcely to be imagined at how small an expense he may grow considerable.

A person of quality, by a single paper, may engross the honour of a volume. Fame is, indeed, dealt with a hand less and less bounteous through the subordinate ranks, till it descends to the professed author, who will find it very difficult to get more than he deserves; but every man who does not want it, or who needs not value it, may have liberal allowances; and, for five letters in the year sent to the *Idler*, of which perhaps only two are printed, will be promoted to the first rank of writers by those who are weary of the present race of wits, and wish to sink them into obscurity before the lustre of a name not yet known enough to be detested.

N° 3. SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 1758.

Otia vitæ
Solamur cantu.

STAT.

It has long been the complaint of those who frequent the theatres, that all the dramatic art has been long exhausted, and that the vicissitudes of fortune, and accidents of life, have been shown in every possible combination, till the first scene informs us of the last, and the play no sooner opens, than every auditor knows how it will conclude. When a conspiracy is formed in a tragedy we guess by whom it will be detected; when a letter is dropt in a comedy we can tell by whom it will be found. Nothing is now left for the poet but character and sentiment, which are to make their way as they can, without the soft anxiety of suspense, or the enlivening agitation of surprise.

A new paper lies under the same disadvantages as a new play. There is danger lest it be new without novelty. My earlier predecessors had their choice of vices and follies, and selected such as were most likely to raise merriment or attract attention; they had the whole field of life before them, untrodden and unsurveyed; characters of every kind shot up in their way, and those of the most luxuriant growth, or most conspicuous colours, were naturally cropt by the first sickle. They that follow are forced to peep into neglected corners, to note the casual varieties of the same species, and to

recommend themselves by minute industry, and distinctions too subtle for common eyes.

Sometimes it may happen that the haste or negligence of the first inquirers has left enough behind to reward another search; sometimes new objects start up under the eye, and he that is looking for one kind of matter, is amply gratified by the discovery of another. But still it must be allowed, that, as more is taken, less can remain; and every truth brought newly to light impoverishes the mine, from which succeeding intellects are to dig their treasures.

Many philosophers imagine that the elements themselves may be in time exhausted; that the sun, by shining long, will effuse all its light; and that, by the continual waste of aqueous particles, the whole earth will at last become a sandy desert.

I would not advise my readers to disturb themselves by contriving how they shall live without light and water. For the days of universal thirst and perpetual darkness are at a great distance. The ocean and the sun will last our time, and we may leave posterity to shift for themselves.

But if the stores of nature are limited, much more narrow bounds must be set to the modes of life; and mankind may want a moral or amusing paper, many years before they shall be deprived of drink or daylight. This want, which to the busy and inventive may seem easily remediable by some substitute or other, the whole race of *Idlers* will feel with all the sensibility that such torpid animals can suffer.

When I consider the innumerable multitudes that, having no motive of desire, or determination of will, lie freezing in perpetual inactivity, till some external impulse puts them in motion; who awake in the morning, vacant of thought, with minds gaping for the intellectual food, which some kind essayist has

been accustomed to supply, I am moved by the commiseration with which all human beings ought to behold the distresses of each other, to try some expedients for their relief, and to inquire by what methods the listless may be actuated, and the empty be replenished.

There are said to be pleasures in madness known only to madmen. There are certainly miseries in idleness which the *Idler* only can conceive. These miseries I have often felt and often bewailed. I know by experience how welcome is every avocation that summons the thoughts to a new image; and how much languor and lassitude are relieved by that officiousness which offers a momentary amusement to him who is unable to find it for himself.

It is naturally indifferent to this race of men what entertainment they receive, so they are but entertained. They catch, with equal eagerness, at a moral lecture, or the memoirs of a robber; a prediction of the appearance of a comet, or the calculation of the chances of a lottery.

They might, therefore, easily be pleased if they consulted only their own minds; but those who will not take the trouble to think for themselves, have always somebody that thinks for them; and the difficulty of writing is to please those from whom others learn to be pleased.

Much mischief is done in the world with very little interest or design. He that assumes the character of a critic, and justifies his claim by perpetual censure, imagines that he is hurting none but the author, and him he considers as a pestilent animal, whom every other being has a right to persecute; little does he think how many harmless men he involves in his own guilt, by teaching them to be noxious without malignity, and to repeat objections which they do not understand; or how many honest minds

he debars from pleasure, by exciting an artificial fastidiousness, and making them too wise to concur with their own sensations. He who is taught by a critic to dislike that which pleased him in his natural state, has the same reason to complain of his instructor, as the madman to rail at his doctor, who, when he thought himself master of Peru, physicked him to poverty.

If men will struggle against their own advantage, they are not to expect that the *Idler* will take much pains upon them; he has himself to please as well as them, and has long learned, or endeavoured to learn, not to make the pleasure of others too necessary to his own.

N° 4. SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1758.

Πάντας γὰρ φιλέσκε.
HOM.

CHARITY, or tenderness for the poor, which is now justly considered, by a great part of mankind, is inseparable from piety, and in which almost all the goodness of the present age consists, is, I think, known only to those who enjoy, either immediately or by transmission, the light of revelation.

Those ancient nations who have given us the wisest models of government, and the brightest examples of patriotism, whose institutions have been transcribed by all succeeding legislatures, and whose history is studied by every candidate for political or military

reputation, have left behind them no mention of alms-houses or hospitals, of places where age might repose, or sickness be relieved.

The *Roman* emperors, indeed, gave large donatives to the citizens and soldiers, but these distributions were always reckoned rather popular than virtuous: nothing more was intended than an ostentation of liberality, nor was any recompence expected, but suffrages and acclamations.

Their beneficence was merely occasional; he that ceased to need the favour of the people, ceased likewise to court it; and, therefore, no man thought it either necessary or wise to make any standing provision for the needy, to look forwards to the wants of posterity, or to secure successions of charity, for successions of distress.

Compassion is, by some reasoners, on whom the name of philosophers has been too easily conferred, resolved into an affection merely selfish, an involuntary perception of pain at the involuntary sight of a being like ourselves languishing in misery. But this sensation, if ever it be felt at all from the brute instinct of uninstructed nature, will only produce effects desultory and transient; it will never settle into a principle of action, or extend relief to calamities unseen, in generations not yet in being.

The devotion of life or fortune to the succour of the poor, is a height of virtue to which humanity has never risen by its own power. The charity of the *Mahometans* is a precept which their teacher evidently transplanted from the doctrines of Christianity; and the care with which some of the Oriental sects attend, as it is said, to the necessities of the diseased and indigent, may be added to the other arguments which prove *Zoroaster* to have borrowed his institutions from the law of *Moses*.

The present age, though not likely to shine here-

after among the most splendid periods of history, has yet given examples of charity, which may be very properly recommended to imitation. The equal distribution of wealth, which long commerce has produced, does not enable any single hand to raise edifices of piety like fortified cities, to appropriate manors to religious uses, or deal out such large and lasting beneficence as was scattered over the land in ancient times, by those who possessed counties or provinces. But no sooner is a new species of misery brought to view, and a design of relieving it professed, than every hand is open to contribute something, every tongue is busied in solicitation, and every art of pleasure is employed for a time in the interest of virtue.

The most apparent and pressing miseries incident to man, have now their peculiar houses of reception and relief; and there are few among us, raised however little above the danger of poverty, who may not justly claim, what is implored by the *Mahometans* in their most ardent benedictions, the prayers of the poor.

Among those actions which the mind can most securely review with unabated pleasure, is that of having contributed to an hospital for the sick. Of some kinds of charity the consequences are dubious; some evils which beneficence has been busy to remedy, are not certainly known to be very grievous to the sufferer, or detrimental to the community; but no man can question whether wounds and sickness are not really painful; whether it be not worthy of a good man's care to restore those to ease and usefulness, from whose labour infants and women expect their bread, and who, by a casual hurt, or lingering disease, lie pining in want and anguish burthensome to others, and weary of themselves.

Yet, as the hospitals of the present time subsist only

by gifts bestowed at pleasure, without any solid fund of support, there is danger lest the blaze of charity, which now burns with so much heat and splendor, should die away for want of lasting fuel; least fashion should suddenly withdraw her smile, and inconstancy transfer the public attention to something which may appear more eligible, because it will be new.

Whatever is left in the hands of chance must be subject to vicissitude; and when any establishment is found to be useful, it ought to be the next care to make it permanent.

But man is a transitory being, and his designs must partake of the imperfections of their author. To confer duration is not always in our power. We must snatch the present moment, and employ it well, without too much solicitude for the future, and content ourselves with reflecting that our part is performed. He that waits for an opportunity to do much at once, may breathe out his life in idle wishes, and regret, in the last hour, his useless intentions, and barren zeal.

The most active promoters of the present schemes of charity, cannot be cleared from some instances of misconduct, which may awaken contempt or censure, and hasten that neglect which is likely to come too soon of itself. The open competitions between different hospitals, and the animosity with which their patrons oppose one another, may prejudice weak minds against them all. For it will not be easily believed, that any man can, for good reasons, wish to exclude another from doing good. The spirit of charity can only be continued by a reconciliation of these ridiculous feuds; and therefore, instead of contentions who shall be the only benefactors to the needy, let there be no other struggle than who shall be the first.

N° 5. SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1758.

Κάλλος
Ἀνῆ' ἐγκέων ἀπαίνων
Ἀνῆ ἀσπίδων ἀπασῶν.
ANAC.

Our military operations are at last begun; our troops are marching in all the pomp of war, and a camp is marked out on the Isle of Wight; the heart of every Englishman now swells with confidence, though somewhat softened by generous compassion for the consternation and distresses of our enemies.

This formidable armament, and splendid march, produce different effects upon different minds, according to the boundless diversities of temper, occupation, and habits of thought.

Many a tender maiden considers her lover as already lost, because he cannot reach the camp but by crossing the sea; men of a more political understanding are persuaded that we shall now see, in a few days, the ambassadors of France supplicating for pity. Some are hoping for a bloody battle, because a bloody battle makes a vendible narrative; some are composing songs of victory; some planning arches of triumph; and some are mixing fireworks for the celebration of a peace.

Of all extensive and complicated objects different parts are selected by different eyes; and minds are variously affected, as they vary their attention. The care of the public is now fixed upon our soldiers, who are leaving their native country to wander, none can tell how long, in the pathless deserts of the *Isle*

of Wight. The tender sigh for their sufferings, and the gay drink to their success. I who look, or believe myself to look, with more philosophic eyes on human affairs, must confess, that I saw the troops march with little emotion; my thoughts were fixed upon other scenes, and the tear stole into my eyes, not for those who were going away, but for those who were left behind.

We have no reason to doubt but our troops will proceed with proper caution; there are men among them who can take care of themselves. But how shall the ladies endure without them? By what arts can they, who have long had no joy but from the civilities of a soldier, now amuse their hours, and solace their separation?

Of fifty thousand men, now destined to different stations, if we allow each to have been occasionally necessary only to four women, a short computation will inform us, that two hundred thousand ladies are left to languish in distress; two hundred thousand ladies, who must run to sales and auctions without an attendant; sit at the play without a critic to direct their opinion; buy their fans by their own judgment; dispose shells by their own invention; walk in the Mall without a gallant; go to the gardens without a protector; and shuffle cards with vain impatience, for want of a fourth to complete the party.

Of these ladies, some, I hope, have lap-dogs, and some monkies; but they are unsatisfactory companions. Many useful offices are performed by men of scarlet, to which neither dog nor monkey has adequate abilities. A parrot, indeed, is as fine as a colonel, and, if he has been much used to good company, is not wholly without conversation; but a parrot, after all, is a poor little creature, and has neither sword nor shoulder-knot, can neither dance nor play at cards.

Since the soldiers must obey the call of their duty, and go to that side of the kingdom which faces *France*, I know not why the ladies, who cannot live without them, should not follow them. The prejudices and pride of man have long presumed the sword and spindle made for different hands, and denied the other sex to partake the grandeur of military glory. This notion may be consistently enough received in *France*, where the salique law excludes females from the throne; but we, who allow them to be sovereigns, may surely suppose them capable to be soldiers.

It were to be wished that some men, whose experience and authority might enforce regard, would propose that our encampments for the present year should comprise an equal number of men and women, who should march and fight in mingled bodies. If proper colonels were once appointed, and the drums ordered to beat for female volunteers, our regiments would soon be filled without the reproach or cruelty of an impress.

Of these heroines some might serve on foot, under the denomination of the *Female Buffs*, and some on horseback, with the title of *Lady Hussars*.

What objections can be made to this scheme I have endeavoured maturely to consider, and cannot find that a modern soldier has any duties, except that of obedience, which a lady cannot perform. If the hair has lost its powder, a lady has a puff; if a coat be spotted, a lady has a brush. Strength is of less importance since fire arms have been used; blows of the hand are now seldom exchanged; and what is there to be done in the charge or the retreat beyond the powers of a sprightly maiden.

Our masculine squadrons will not suppose themselves disgraced by their auxiliaries, till they have done something which women could not have done.

The troops of *Braddock* never saw their enemies, and perhaps were defeated by women. If our *American* general had headed an army of girls, he might still have built a fort and taken it. Had *Minorca* been defended by a female garrison, it might have been surrendered, as it was, without a breach; and I cannot but think, that seven thousand women might have ventured to look at *Rochfort*, sack a village, rob a vineyard, and return in safety.

N° 6. SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1753.

Ταμεῖον ἀρείης γεναῖα γυνή.

GR. PRO.

The lady who had undertaken to ride on one horse a thousand miles, in a thousand hours, has completed her journey in little more than two-thirds of the time stipulated, and was conducted through the last mile with triumphal honours. Acclamation shouted before her, and all the flowers of the spring were scattered in her way.

Every heart ought to rejoice when true merit is distinguished with public notice. I am far from wishing either to the Amazon or her horse any diminution of happiness or fame, and cannot but lament that they were not more amply and suitably rewarded.

There was once a time when wreaths of bays or oak were considered as recompenses equal to the most wearisome labours and terrific dangers, and

when the miseries of long marches and stormy seas were at once driven from the remembrance by the fragrance of a garland.

If this heroine had been born in ancient times, she might, perhaps, have been delighted with the simplicity of ancient gratitude; or, if any thing was wanting to full satisfaction, she might have supplied the deficiency with the hope of deification, and anticipated the altars that would be raised, and the vows that would be made, by future candidates for equestrian glory, to the patroness of the race, and the goddess of the stable.

But fate reserved her for a more enlightened age, which has discovered leaves and flowers to be transitory things; which considers profit as the end of honour; and rates the event of every undertaking only by the money that is gained or lost. In these days, to strew the road with daisies and lilies is to mock merit, and delude hope. The toyman will not give his jewels, nor the mercer measure out his silks for vegetable coin. A primrose, though picked up under the feet of the most renowned courser, will neither be received as a stake at cards, nor procure a seat at an opera, nor buy candles for a rout, nor lace for a livery. And though there are many virtuosos, whose sole ambition is to possess something which can be found in no other hand, yet some are more accustomed to store their cabinets by theft than purchase, and none of them would either steal or buy one of the flowers of gratulation till he knows that all the rest are totally destroyed.

Little, therefore, did it avail this wonderful lady to be received, however joyfully, with such obsolete and barren ceremonies of praise. Had the way been covered with guineas, though but for the tenth part of the last mile, she would have considered her skill and diligence as not wholly lost; and might have

rejoiced in the speed and perseverance which had left her such superfluity of time, that she could at leisure gather her reward without the danger of *Atalanta's* miscarriage.

So much ground could not, indeed, have been paved with gold but at a large expense, and we are at present engaged in a war, which demands and enforces frugality. But common rules are made only for common life, and some deviation from general policy may be allowed in favour of a lady that rode a thousand miles, in a thousand hours.

Since the spirit of antiquity so much prevails amongst us, that even on this great occasion we have given flowers instead of money, let us at least complete our imitation of the ancients, and endeavour to transmit to posterity the memory of that virtue which we consider as superior to pecuniary recompence. Let an equestrian statue of this heroine be erected, near the starting-post on the heath of *Newmarket*, to fill kindred souls with emulation, and tell the grand-daughters of our grand-daughters what an *English* maiden has once performed.

As events, however illustrious, are soon obscured if they are intrusted to tradition, I think it necessary that the pedestal should be inscribed with a concise account of this great performance. The composition of this narrative ought not to be committed rashly to improper hands. If the rhetoricians of *Newmarket*, who may be supposed likely to conceive in its full strength the dignity of the subject, should undertake to express it, there is danger lest they admit some phrases which, though well understood at present, may be ambiguous in another century. If posterity should read on a public monument, that *the lady carried her horse a thousand miles in a thousand hours*, they may think that the statue and inscription are at variance, because one

will represent the horse as carrying his lady, and the other tell that the lady carried her horse.

Some doubts likewise may be raised by speculatists, and some controversies be agitated among historians, concerning the motive as well as the manner of the action. As it will be known that this wonder was performed in a time of war, some will suppose that the lady was frighted by invaders, and fled to preserve her life or her chastity: others will conjecture that she was thus honoured for some intelligence carried of the enemy's designs: some will think that she brought news of a victory: others, that she was commissioned to tell of a conspiracy; and some will congratulate themselves on their acuter penetration, and find, that all these notions of patriotism and public spirit are improbable and chimerical; they will confidently tell, that she only ran away from her guardians, and the true causes of her speed were, fear and love.

Let it therefore be carefully mentioned, that by this performance *she won her wager;* and, lest this should, by any change of manners, seem an inadequate or incredible incitement, let it be added, that at this time the original motives of human actions had lost their influence; that the love of praise was extinct; the fear of infamy was become ridiculous; and the only wish of an *Englishman* was, *to win his wager.*

N° 7. SATURDAY, MAY 27, 1758.

One of the principal amusements of the *Idler* is, to read the works of those minute historians the writers of news, who, though contemptuously overlooked by the composers of bulky volumes, are yet necessary in a nation where much wealth produces much leisure, and one part of the people has nothing to do but to observe the lives and fortunes of the other.

To us, who are regaled every morning and evening with intelligence, and are supplied from day to day with materials for conversation, it is difficult to conceive how man can subsist without a news-paper, or to what entertainment companies can assemble in those wide regions of the earth that have neither *Chronicles* nor *Magazines*, neither *Gazettes* nor *Advertisers*, neither *Journals* nor *Evening-Posts*.

There are never great numbers in any nation, whose reason or invention can find employment for their tongues, who can raise a pleasing discourse from their own stock of sentiments and images; and those few who have qualified themselves by speculation for general disquisitions are soon left without an audience. The common talk of men must relate to facts in which the talkers have, or think they have an interest; and where such facts cannot be known, the pleasures of society will be merely sensual. Thus the natives of the *Mahometan* empires, who approach most nearly to *European* civility, have no higher pleasure at their convivial assemblies than

to hear a piper, or gaze upon a tumbler, and no company can keep together longer than they are diverted by sounds or shows.

All foreigners remark, that the knowledge of the common people of *England* is greater than that of any other vulgar. This superiority we undoubtedly owe to the rivulets of intelligence which are continually trickling among us, which every one may catch, and of which every one partakes.

This universal diffusion of instruction is, perhaps, not wholly without its inconveniences; it certainly fills the nation with superficial disputants; enables those to talk who were born to work; and affords information sufficient to elate vanity, and stiffen obstinacy, but too little to enlarge the mind into complete skill for full comprehension.

Whatever is found to gratify the public will be multiplied, by the emulation of venders, beyond necessity or use. This plenty, indeed, produces cheapness, but cheapness always ends in negligence and depravation.

The compilation of news-papers is often committed to narrow and mercenary minds, not qualified for the task of delighting or instructing; who are content to fill their paper, with whatever matter, without industry to gather, or discernment to select.

Thus journals are daily multiplied without increase of knowledge. The tale of the morning paper is told again in the evening, and the narratives of the evening are bought again in the morning. These repetitions, indeed, waste time, but they do not shorten it. The most eager peruser of news is tired before he has completed his labour; and many a man, who enters the coffee-house in his night-gown and slippers, is called away to his shop, or his dinner, before he has well considered the state of *Europe*.

It is discovered by *Reaumur*, that spiders might

make silk, if they could be persuaded to live in peace together. The writers of news, if they could be confederated, might give more pleasure to the public. The morning and evening authors might divide an event between them; a single action, and that not of much importance, might be gradually discovered, so as to vary a whole week with joy, anxiety, and conjecture.

We know that a *French* ship of war was lately taken by a ship of *England;* but this event was suffered to burst upon us all at once, and then what we knew already was echoed from day to day, and from week to week.

Let us suppose these spiders of literature to spin together, and inquire to what an extensive web such another event might be regularly drawn, and how six morning and six evening writers might agree to retail their articles.

On *Monday Morning* the captain of a ship might arrive, who left the *Friseur* of *France*, and the *Bull-dog*, captain *Grim*, in sight of one another, so that an engagement seemed unavoidable.

Monday Evening. A sound of cannon was heard off *Cape Finisterre*, supposed to be those of the *Bull-dog* and *Friseur*.

Tuesday Morning. It was this morning reported, that the *Bull-dog* engaged the *Friseur*, yard-arm and yard-arm, three glasses and a half, but was obliged to sheer off for want of powder. It is hoped that inquiry will be made into this affair in a proper place.

Tuesday Evening. The account of the engagement between the *Bull-dog* and *Friseur* was premature.

Wednesday Morning. Another express is arrived, which brings news, that the *Friseur* had lost all her masts, and three hundred of her men, in the late engagement; and that captain *Grim* is come into harbour much shattered.

Wednesday Evening. We hear that the brave captain *Grim*, having expended his powder, proposed to enter the *Friseur* sword in hand; but that his lieutenant, the nephew of a certain nobleman, remonstrated against it.

Thursday Morning. We wait impatiently for a full account of the late engagement between the *Bull-dog* and *Friseur*.

Thursday Evening. It is said the order of the *Bath* will be sent to captain *Grim*.

Friday Morning. A certain Lord of the Admiralty has been heard to say of a certain captain, that if he had done his duty, a certain *French* ship might have been taken. It was not thus that merit was rewarded in the days of *Cromwel*.

Friday Evening. There is certain information at the Admiralty, that the *Friseur* is taken, after a resistance of two hours.

Saturday Morning. A letter from one of the gunners of the *Bull-dog*, mentions the taking of the *Friseur*, and attributes their success wholly to the bravery and resolution of captain *Grim*, who never owed any of his advancement to borough-jobbers, or any other corruptors of the people.

Saturday Evening. Captain *Grim* arrived at the Admiralty, with an account that he engaged the *Friseur*, a ship of equal force with his own, off *Cape Finisterre*, and took her, after an obstinate resistance, having killed one hundred and fifty of the *French*, with the loss of ninety-five of his own men.

N° 8. SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

In the time of public danger, it is every man's duty to withdraw his thoughts in some measure from his private interest, and employ part of his time for the general welfare. National conduct ought to be the result of national wisdom, a plan formed by mature consideration and diligent selection out of all the schemes which may be offered, and all the information which can be procured.

In a battle, every man should fight as if he was the single champion; in preparations for war, every man should think, as if the last event depended on his counsel. None can tell what discoveries are within his reach, or how much he may contribute to the public safety.

Full of these considerations, I have carefully reviewed the process of the war, and find, what every other man has found, that we have hitherto added nothing to our military reputation: that at one time we have been beaten by enemies whom we did not see; and, at another, have avoided the sight of enemies lest we should be beaten.

Whether our troops are defective in discipline or in courage, is not very useful to inquire; they evidently want something necessary to success; and he

that shall supply that want will deserve well of his country.

To learn of an enemy has always been accounted politic and honourable; and, therefore, I hope it will raise no prejudice against my project, to confess that I borrowed it from a *Frenchman*.

When the Isle of *Rhodes* was, many centuries ago, in the hands of that military order now called the *Knights of Malta*, it was ravaged by a dragon, who inhabited a den under a rock, from which he issued forth when he was hungry or wanton, and without fear or mercy devoured men and beasts as they came in his way. Many councils were held, and many devices offered, for his destruction; but as his back was armed with impenetrable scales, none would venture to attack him. At last *Dudon*, a *French* knight, undertook the deliverance of the island. From some place of security he took a view of the dragon, or, as a modern soldier would say, *reconnoitred* him, and observed that his belly was naked and vulnerable. He then returned home to take his *arrangements;* and, by a very exact imitation of nature, made a dragon of pasteboard, in the belly of which he put beef and mutton, and accustomed two sturdy mastiffs to feed themselves by tearing their way to the concealed flesh. When his dogs were well practised in this method of plunder, he marched out with them at his heels, and showed them the dragon; they rushed upon him in quest of their dinner; *Dudon* battered his scull, while they lacerated his belly; and neither his sting nor claws were able to defend him.

Something like this might be practised in our present state. Let a fortification be raised on *Salisbury-Plain*, resembling *Brest*, or *Toulon*, or *Paris* itself, with all the usual preparation for defence: let the

inclosure be filled with beef and ale; let the soldiers, from some proper eminence, see shirts waving upon lines, and here and there a plump landlady hurrying about with pots in their hands. When they are sufficiently animated to advance, lead them in exact order, with fife and drum, to that side whence the wind blows, till they come within the scent of roast meat and tobacco. Contrive that they may approach the place fasting, about half an hour after dinner-time, assure them that there is no danger, and command an attack.

If nobody within either moves or speaks, it is not unlikely that they may carry the place by storm; but if a panic should seize them, it will be proper to defer the enterprise to a more hungry hour. When they have entered, let them fill their bellies and return to the camp.

On the next day let the same place be shown them again, but with some additions of strength or terror. I cannot pretend to inform our generals through what gradations of danger they should train their men to fortitude. They best know what the soldiers and what themselves can bear. It will be proper that the war should every day vary its appearance. Sometimes, as they mount the rampart, a cook may throw fat upon the fire, to accustom them to a sudden blaze; and sometimes by the clatter of empty pots, they may be inured to formidable noises. But let it never be forgotten, that victory must repose with a full belly.

In time it will be proper to bring our *French* prisoners from the coast, and place them upon the walls in martial order. At their first appearance their hands must be tied, but they may be allowed to grin. In a month they may guard the place with their hands loosed, provided that on pain of death they be forbidden to strike.

By this method our army will soon be brought to look an enemy in the face. But it has been lately observed, that fear is received by the ear as well as the eyes; and the *Indian* war-cry is represented as too dreadful to be endured; as a sound that will force the bravest veteran to drop his weapon, and desert his rank; that will deafen his ear, and chill his breast; that will neither suffer him to hear orders or to feel shame, or retain any sensibility but the dread of death.

That the savage clamours of naked barbarians should thus terrify troops disciplined to war, and ranged in array with arms in their hands, is surely strange. But this is no time to reason. I am of opinion, that by a proper mixture of asses, bulls, turkeys, geese, and tragedians, a noise might be procured equally horrid with the war-cry. When our men have been encouraged by frequent victories, nothing will remain but to qualify them for extreme danger, by a sudden concert of terrific vociferation. When they have endured this last trial, let them be led to action, as men who are no longer to be frightened; as men who can bear at once the grimaces of the *Gauls*, and the howl of the *Americans*.

N° 9. SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I HAVE read you; that is a favour few authors can boast of having received from me besides yourself. My intention in telling you of it is to inform you, that you have both pleased and angered me. Never did writer appear so delightful to me as you did when you adopted the name of the *Idler*. But what a falling-off was there when your first production was brought to light! A natural, irresistible attachment to that favourable passion, *idling*, had led me to hope for indulgence from the *Idler*, but I find him a stranger to the title.

What rules has he proposed totally to unbrace the slackened nerve; to shade the heavy eye of inattention; to give the smooth feature and the uncontracted muscle; or procure insensibility to the whole animal composition?

These were some of the placid blessings I promised myself the enjoyment of, when I committed violence upon myself by mustering up all my strength to set about reading you; but I am disappointed in them all, and the stroke of eleven in the morning is still as terrible to me as before, and I find putting on my clothes still as painful and laborious. Oh that our climate would permit that original nakedness which

the thrice happy *Indians* to this day enjoy! How many unsolicitous hours should I bask away, warmed in bed by the sun's glorious beams, could I, like them, tumble from thence in a moment, when necessity obliges me to endure the torment of getting upon my legs.

But wherefore do I talk to you upon subjects of this delicate nature? you who seem ignorant of the inexpressible charms of the elbow-chair, attended with a soft stool for the elevation of the feet! Thus, vacant of thought, do I indulge the live-long day.

You may define happiness as you please; I embrace that opinion which makes it consist in the absence of pain. To reflect is pain; to stir is pain; therefore I never reflect or stir but when I cannot help it. Perhaps you will call my scheme of life indolence, and therefore think the *Idler* excused from taking any notice of me: but I have always looked upon indolence and idleness as the same; and so desire you will now and then, while you profess yourself of our fraternity, take some notice of me, and others in my situation, who think they have a right to your assistance; or relinquish the name.

You may publish, burn, or destroy this, just as you are in the humour; it is ten to one but I forget that I wrote it before it reaches you. I believe you may find a motto for it in Horace, but I cannot reach him without getting out of my chair; that is a sufficient reason for my not affixing any.—And being obliged to sit upright to ring the bell for my servant to convey this to the penny-post, if I slip the opportunity of his being now in the room, makes me break off abruptly.

This correspondent, whoever he be, is not to be dismissed without some tokens of regard. There is no mark more certain of a genuine *Idler* than un-

easiness without molestation, and complaint without a grievance.

Yet my gratitude to the contributer of half a paper shall not wholly overpower my sincerity. I must inform you, that, with all his pretensions, he that calls for directions to be idle, is yet but in the rudiments of idleness, and has attained neither the practice nor theory of wasting life. The true nature of idleness he will know in time, by continuing to be idle. *Virgil* tells us of an impetuous and rapid being, that acquires strength by motion. The *Idler* acquires weight by lying still.

The *vis inertia*, the quality of resisting all external impulse, is hourly increasing; the restless and troublesome faculties of attention and distinction, reflection on the past, and solicitude for the future, by a long indulgence of idleness, will, like tapers in unelastic air, be gradually extinguished; and the officious lover, the vigilant soldier, the busy trader, may, by a judicious composure of his mind, sink into a state approaching to that of brute matter; in which he shall retain the consciousness of his own existence, only by an obtuse languor and drowsy discontent.

This is the lowest stage to which the favourites of idleness can descend; these regions of undelighted quiet can be entered by few. Of those that are prepared to sink down into their shade, some are roused into action by avarice or ambition, some are awakened by the voice of fame, some allured by the smile of beauty, and many withheld by the importunities of want. Of all the enemies of idleness, want is the most formidable. Fame is soon found to be a sound, and love a dream; avarice and ambition may be justly suspected of privy confederacies with idleness; for when they have for a while protected their votaries, they often deliver them up to end their lives

under her dominion. Want always struggles against idleness, but Want herself is often overcome; and every hour shows the careful observer those who had rather live in ease than in plenty.

So wide is the region of Idleness, and so powerful her influence. But she does not immediately confer all her gifts. My correspondent, who seems, with all his errors, worthy of advice, must be told, that he is calling too hastily for the last effusion of total insensibility. Whatever he may have been taught by unskilful *Idlers* to believe, labour is necessary in his initiation to idleness. He that never labours may know the pains of idleness, but not the pleasure. The comfort is, that if he devotes himself to insensibility, he will daily lengthen the intervals of idleness, and shorten those of labour, till at last he will lie down to rest, and no longer disturb the world or himself by bustle or competition.

Thus I have endeavoured to give him that information which, perhaps, after all, he did not want: for a true *Idler* often calls for that which he knows is never to be had, and asks questions which he does not desire ever to be answered.

N° 10. SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1758.

CREDULITY, or confidence of opinion too great for the evidence from which opinion is derived, we find to be a general weakness imputed by every sect and party to all others; and, indeed, by every man to every other man.

Of all kinds of credulity, the most obstinate and wonderful is that of political zealots; of men, who being numbered, they not know how or why, in any of the parties that divide a state, resign the use of their own eyes and ears, and resolve to believe nothing that does not favour those whom they profess to follow.

The bigot of philosophy is seduced by authorities which he has not always opportunities to examine, is entangled in systems by which truth and falsehood are inextricably complicated, or undertakes to talk on subjects which nature did not form him able to comprehend.

The Cartesian, who denies that his horse feels the spur, or that the hare is afraid when the hounds approach her; the disciple of *Malbranche*, who maintains that the man was not hurt by the bullet, which, according to vulgar apprehension, swept away his legs; the follower of *Berkeley*, who, while he sits writing at his table, declares that he has neither table, paper, nor fingers; have all the honour at least of being deceived by fallacies not easily detected, and may plead that they did not forsake truth, but for appearances which they were not able to distinguish from it.

But the man who engages in a party has seldom to do with any thing remote or abstruse. The present state of things is before his eyes; and, if he cannot be satisfied without retrospection, yet he seldom extends his views beyond the historical events of the last century. All the knowledge that he can want is within his attainment, and most of the arguments which he can hear are within his capacity.

Yet so it is that an *Idler* meets every hour of his life with men who have different opinions upon every thing past, present, and future; who deny the most notorious facts, contradict the most cogent

truths, and persist in asserting to-day what they asserted yesterday, in defiance of evidence, and contempt of confutation.

Two of my companions, who are grown old in idleness, are *Tom Tempest* and *Jack Sneaker*. Both of them consider themselves as neglected by their parties, and therefore entitled to credit; for why should they favour ingratitude? They are both men of integrity, where no factious interest is to be promoted; and both lovers of truth, when they are not heated with political debate.

Tom Tempest is a steady friend to the house of *Stuart*. He can recount the prodigies that have appeared in the sky, and the calamities that have afflicted the nation every year from the Revolution; and is of opinion, that, if the exiled family had continued to reign, there would have neither been worms in our ships, nor caterpillars in our trees. He wonders that the nation was not awakened by the hard frost to a revocation of the true king, and is hourly afraid that the whole island will be lost in the sea. He believes that king *William* burned *Whitehall* that he might steal the furniture; and that *Tillotson* died an atheist. Of queen *Anne* he speaks with more tenderness, owns that she meant well, and can tell by whom and why she was poisoned. In the succeeding reigns all has been corruption, malice, and design. He believes that nothing ill has ever happened for these forty years by chance or error; he holds that the battle of *Dettingen* was won by mistake, and that of *Fontenoy* lost by contract; that the *Victory* was sunk by a private order; that *Cornhill* was fired by emissaries from the council; and the arch of *Westminster-bridge* was so contrived as to sink, on purpose that the nation might be put to charge. He considers the new road to *Islington* as an encroach-

ment on liberty, and often asserts that *broad wheels* will be the ruin of *England*.

Tom is generally vehement and noisy, but nevertheless has some secrets which he always communicates in a whisper. Many and many a time has *Tom* told me, in a corner, that our miseries were almost at an end, and that we should see, in a month, another monarch on the throne; the time elapses without a revolution: *Tom* meets me again with new intelligence, the whole scheme is now settled, and we shall see great events in another month.

Jack Sneaker is a hearty adherent to the present establishment; he has known those who saw the bed into which the Pretender was conveyed in a warming pan. He often rejoices that the nation was not enslaved by the *Irish*. He believes that king *William* never lost a battle, and that if he had lived one year longer he would have conquered *France*. He holds that *Charles* the First was a Papist. He allows there were some good men in the reign of queen *Anne*, but the peace of *Utrecht* brought a blast upon the nation, and has been the cause of all the evil that we have suffered to the present hour. He believes that the scheme of the *South Sea* was well intended, but that it miscarried by the influence of *France*. He considers a standing army as the bulwark of liberty; thinks us secured from corruption by septennial parliaments; relates how we are enriched and strengthened by the electoral dominions, and declares that the public debt is a blessing to the nation.

Yet, amidst all this prosperity, poor *Jack* is hourly disturbed by the dread of Popery. He wonders that some stricter laws are not made against Papists, and is sometimes afraid that they are busy with *French* gold among the bishops and judges.

He cannot believe that the Nonjurors are so quiet for nothing, they must certainly be forming some

plot for the establishment of popery; he does not think the present oath sufficiently binding, and wishes that some better security could be found for the succession of *Hanover*. He is zealous for the naturalization of foreign Protestants, and rejoiced at the admission of the *Jews* to the *English* privileges, because he thought a *Jew* would never be a Papist.

N° 11. SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1758.

It is commonly observed, that when two *Englishmen* meet, their first talk is of the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm.

There are, among the numerous lovers of subtilties and paradoxes, some who derive the civil institutions of every country from its climate, who impute freedom and slavery to the temperature of the air, can fix the meridian of vice and virtue, and tell at what degree of latitude we are to expect courage or timidity, knowledge or ignorance.

From these dreams of idle speculation, a slight survey of life, and a little knowledge of history, is sufficient to awaken any inquirer, whose ambition of distinction has not overpowered his love of truth. Forms of government are seldom the result of much deliberation; they are framed by chance in popular assemblies, or in conquered countries by despotic authority. Laws are often occasional, often capri-

cious, made always by a few, and sometimes by a single voice. Nations have changed their characters; slavery is now no where more patiently endured, than in countries once inhabited by the zealots of liberty.

But national customs can arise only from general agreement; they are not imposed but chosen, and are continued only by the continuance of their cause. An *Englishman*'s notice of the weather, is the natural consequence of changeable skies and uncertain seasons. In many parts of the world, wet weather and dry are regularly expected at certain periods; but in our island every man goes to sleep, unable to guess whether he shall behold in the morning a bright or cloudy atmosphere, whether his rest shall be lulled by a shower, or broken by a tempest. We therefore rejoice mutually at good weather, as at an escape from something that we feared; and mutually complain of bad, as of the loss of something that we hoped.

Such is the reason of our practice; and who shall treat it with contempt? Surely not the attendant on a court, whose business is to watch the looks of a being weak and foolish as himself, and whose vanity is, to recount the names of men who might drop into nothing, and leave no vacuity; nor the proprietor of funds, who stops his acquaintance in the street to tell him of the loss of half-a-crown; nor the inquirer after news, who fills his head with foreign events, and talks of skirmishes and sieges, of which no consequence will ever reach his hearers or himself. The weather is a nobler and more interesting subject; it is the present state of the skies and of the earth, on which plenty and famine are suspended, on which millions depend for the necessaries of life.

The weather is frequently mentioned for another reason, less honourable to my dear countrymen.

Our dispositions too frequently change with the colour of the sky; and when we find ourselves cheerful and good-natured, we naturally pay our acknowledgments to the powers of sunshine; or, if we sink into dulness and peevishness, look round the horizon for an excuse, and charge our discontent upon an easterly wind or a cloudy day.

Surely nothing is more reproachful to a being endowed with reason, than to resign its powers to the influence of the air, and live in dependence on the weather and the wind, for the only blessings which nature has put into our power, tranquillity and benevolence. To look up to the sky for the nutriment of our bodies, is the condition of nature; to call upon the sun for peace and gaiety, to deprecate the clouds lest sorrow should overwhelm us, is the cowardice of idleness, and idolatry of folly.

Yet, even in this age of inquiry and knowledge, when superstition is driven away, and omens and prodigies have lost their terrors, we find this folly countenanced by frequent examples. Those that laugh at the portentous glare of a comet, and hear a crow with equal tranquillity from the right or left, will yet talk of times and situations proper for intellectual performances, will imagine the fancy exalted by vernal breezes, and the reason invigorated by a bright calm.

If men who have given up themselves to fanciful credulity, would confine their conceits in their own minds, they might regulate their lives by the barometer, with inconvenience only to themselves; but to fill the world with accounts of intellects subject to ebb and flow, of one genius that awakened in the spring, and another that ripened in the autumn, of one mind expanded in the summer, and of another concentrated in the winter, is no less dangerous than to tell children of bugbears and goblins. Fear will

find every house haunted; and idleness will wait for ever for the moment of illumination.

This distinction of seasons is produced only by imagination operating on luxury. To temperance every day is bright, and every hour is propitious to diligence. He that shall resolutely excite his faculties, or exert his virtues, will soon make himself superior to the seasons, and may set at defiance the morning mist, and the evening damp, the blasts of the east, and the clouds of the south.

It was the boast of the *Stoic* philosophy, to make man unshaken by calamity, and unelated by success; incorruptible by pleasure, and invulnerable by pain; these are heights of wisdom which none ever attained, and to which few can aspire; but there are lower degrees of constancy necessary to common virtue; and every man, however he may distrust himself in the extremes of good or evil, might at least struggle against the tyranny of the climate, and refuse to enslave his virtue or his reason to the most variable of all variations, the changes of the weather.

N° 12. SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1758.

THAT every man is important in his own eyes, is a position of which we all either voluntarily or unwarily, at least once an hour confess the truth; and it will unavoidably follow, that every man believes himself important to the public.

The right which this importance gives us to general notice and visible distinction, is one of those dis-

putable privileges which we have not always courage to assert, and which we, therefore, suffer to lie dormant, till some elation of mind, or vicissitude of fortune, incites us to declare our pretensions, and enforce our demands. And hopeless as the claim of vulgar characters may seem to the supercilious and severe, there are few who do not at one time or other endeavour to step forward beyond their rank, who do not make some struggles for fame, and show that they think all other conveniences and delights imperfectly enjoyed without a name.

To get a name can happen but to few. A name, even in the most commercial nation, is one of the few things which cannot be bought. It is the free gift of mankind, which must be deserved before it will be granted, and is at last unwillingly bestowed. But this unwillingness only increases desire in him who believes his merit sufficient to overcome it.

There is a particular period of life in which this fondness for a name seems principally to predominate in both sexes. Scarce any couple comes together but the nuptials are declared in the newspapers with encomiums on each party. Many an eye, ranging over the page with eager curiosity in quest of statesmen and heroes, is stopped by a marriage celebrated between Mr. *Buckram*, an eminent salesman in *Threadneedle-street*, and Miss *Dolly Juniper*, the only daughter of an eminent distiller of the parish of *St. Giles's in the Fields*, a young lady adorned with every accomplishment that can give happiness to the married state. Or we are told amidst our impatience for the event of a battle, that on a certain day Mr. *Winker*, a tide-waiter at *Yarmouth*, was married to Mrs. *Cackle*, a widow lady of great accomplishments; and that as soon as the ceremony was performed they sat out in a post-chaise for *Yarmouth*.

Many are the inquiries which such intelligence

must undoubtedly raise, but nothing in the world is lasting. When the reader has contemplated with envy, or with gladness, the felicity of Mr. *Buckram* and Mr. *Winker*, and ransacked his memory for the names of *Juniper* and *Cackle*, his attention is diverted to other thoughts, by finding that *Mirza* will not cover this season; or that a spaniel has been lost or stolen, that answers to the name of *Ranger*.

Whence it arises that on the day of marrige all agree to call thus openly for honours, I am not able to discover. Some, perhaps, think it kind, by a public declaration to put an end to the hopes of rivalry and the fears of jealousy, to let parents know that they may set their daughters at liberty whom they have locked up for fear of the bridegroom, or to dismiss to their counters and their offices the amorous youths that had been used to hover round the dwelling of the bride.

These connubial praises may have another cause. It may be the intention of the husband and wife to dignify themselves in the eyes of each other, and, according to their different tempers or expectations, to win affection, or enforce respect.

It was said of the family of *Lucas* that it was *noble*, for *all the brothers were valiant, and all the sisters were virtuous.* What would a stranger say of the *English* nation, in which, on the day of marriage, all the men are *eminent* and all the women *beautiful, accomplished* and *rich?*

How long the wife will be persuaded of the eminence of her husband, or the husband continue to believe that his wife has the qualities required to make marriage happy, may reasonably be questioned. I am afraid that much time seldom passes before each is convinced that praises are fallacious, and particularly those praises which we confer upon ourselves.

I should, therefore, think that this custom might be omitted without any loss to the community; and that the sons and daughters of lanes and alleys might go hereafter to the next church, with no witnesses of their worth or happiness but their parents and their friends; but if they cannot be happy on their bridal day without some gratification of their vanity, I hope they will be willing to encourage a friend of mine who proposes to devote his powers to their service.

Mr. *Settle*, a man whose *eminence* was once allowed by the *eminent*, and whose *accomplishments* were confessed by the *accomplished*, in the latter part of a long life supported himself by an uncommon expedient. He had a standing elegy and epithalamium, of which only the first and last were leaves varied occasionally, and the intermediate pages were, by general terms, left applicable alike to every character. When any marriage became known, *Settle* ran to the bridegroom with his epithalamium; and when he heard of any death, ran to the heir with his elegy.

Who can think himself disgraced by a trade that was practised so long by the rival of *Dryden*, by the poet whose *Empress of Morocco* was played before princes by ladies of the court?

My friend purposes to open an office in the *Fleet* for matrimonial panegyrics, and will accommodate all with praise who think their own powers of expression inadequate to their merit. He will sell any man or woman the virtue or qualification which is most fashionable or most desired; but desires his customers to remember, that he sets beauty at the highest price, and riches at the next; and, if he be well paid, throws in virtue for nothing.

N° 13. SATURDAY, JULY 8, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

DEAR MR. IDLER;

THOUGH few men of prudence are much inclined to interpose in disputes between man and wife, who commonly make peace at the expense of the arbitrator, yet I will venture to lay before you a controversy, by which the quiet of my house has been long disturbed, and which, unless you can decide it, is likely to produce lasting evils, and embitter those hours which nature seems to have appropriated to tenderness and repose.

I married a wife with no great fortune, but of a family remarkable for domestic prudence, and elegant frugality. I lived with her at ease, if not with happiness, and seldom had any reason of complaint. The house was always clean, the servants very active and regular, dinner was on the table every day at the same minute, and the ladies of the neighbourhood were frightened when I invited their husbands, lest their own economy should be less esteemed.

During this gentle lapse of life my dear brought me three daughters. I wished for a son, to continue the family; but my wife often tells me, that boys are dirty things, and are always troublesome in a house; and declares that she has hated the sight of them ever

since she saw lady *Fondle*'s eldest son ride over a carpet with his hobby-horse all mire.

I did not much attend to her opinion, but knew that girls could not be made boys; and therefore composed myself to bear what I could not remedy, and resolved to bestow that care on my daughters to which only the sons are commonly thought entitled.

But my wife's notions of education differ widely from mine. She is an irreconcileable enemy to idleness, and considers every state of life as idleness, in which the hands are not employed, or some art acquired, by which she thinks money may be got or saved.

In pursuance of this principle, she calls up her daughters at a certain hour, and appoints them a task of needlework to be performed before breakfast. They are confined in a garret, which has its window in the roof, both because the work is best done at a skylight, and because children are apt to lose time by looking about them.

They bring down their work to breakfast, and as they deserve are commended or reproved; they are then sent up with a new task till dinner; if no company is expected, their mother sits with them the whole afternoon, to direct their operations, and to draw patterns, and is sometimes denied to her nearest relations, when she is engaged in teaching them a new stitch.

By this continual exercise of their diligence, she has obtained a very considerable number of laborious performances. We have twice as many fire-skreens as chimnies, and three flourished quilts for every bed. Half the rooms are adorned with a kind of *sutile pictures*, which imitate tapestry. But all their work is not set out to show; she has boxes filled with knit garters and braided shoes. She has twenty

covers for side-saddles embroidered with silver flowers, and has curtains wrought with gold in various figures, which she resolves some time or other to hang up. All these she displays to her company whenever she is elate with merit, and eager for praise; and amidst the praises which her friends and herself bestow upon her merit, she never fails to turn to me, and ask what all these would cost, if I had been to buy them.

I sometimes venture to tell her that many of the ornaments are superfluous; that what is done with so much labour might have been supplied by a very easy purchase; that the work is not always worth the materials; and that I know not why the children should be persecuted with useless tasks, or obliged to make shoes that are never worn. She answers with a look of contempt, that men never care how money goes, and proceeds to tell of a dozen new chairs for which she is contriving covers, and of a couch which she intends to stand as a monument of needlework.

In the mean time the girls grow up in total ignorance of every thing past, present, and future. *Molly* asked me the other day, whether *Ireland* was in *France*, and was ordered by her mother to mend her hem. *Kitty* knows not, at sixteen, the difference between a Protestant and a Papist, because she has been employed three years in filling a side of a closet with a hanging that is to represent *Cranmer* in the flames. And *Dolly*, my eldest girl, is now unable to read a chapter in the Bible, having spent all the time, which other children pass at school, in working the interview between *Solomon* and the queen of *Sheba*.

About a month ago *Tent* and *Turkey*-stitch seemed at a stand; my wife knew not what new work to introduce; I ventured to propose that the girls should now learn to read and write, and mentioned the

necessity of a little arithmetic; but, unhappily, my wife has discovered that linen wears out, and has bought the girls three little wheels, that they may spin huckaback, for the servants table. I remonstrated, that with larger wheels they might dispatch in an hour what must now cost them a day; but she told me, with irresistible authority, that any business is better than idleness; that when these wheels are set upon a table, with mats under them, they will turn without noise and keep the girls upright; that great wheels are not fit for gentlewomen; and that with these, small as they are, she does not doubt but that the three girls, if they are kept close, will spin every year as much cloth as would cost five pounds if one were to buy it.

N° 14. SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1758.

When *Diogenes* received a visit in his tub from *Alexander the Great*, and was asked, according to the ancient forms of royal courtesy, what petition he had to offer; *I have nothing*, said he, *to ask, but that you would remove to the other side, that you may not, by intercepting the sunshine, take from me what you cannot give.*

Such was the demand of *Diogenes* from the greatest monarch of the earth, which those, who have less power than *Alexander*, may, with yet more propriety, apply to themselves. He that does much good, may be allowed to do sometimes a little harm. But if the opportunities of beneficence be denied by

fortune, innocence should at least be vigilantly preserved.

It is well known that time once past never returns; and that the moment which is lost, is lost for ever. Time, therefore, ought, above all other kinds of property, to be free from invasion; and yet there is no man who does not claim the power of wasting that time which is the right of others.

This usurpation is so general, that a very small part of the year is spent by choice; scarcely any thing is done when it is intended, or obtained when it is desired. Life is continually ravaged by invaders; one steals away an hour, and another a day: one conceals the robbery by hurrying us into business, another by lulling us with amusement; the depredation is continued through a thousand vicissitudes of tumult and tranquillity, till, having lost all, we can lose no more.

This waste of the lives of men has been very frequently charged upon the Great, whose followers linger from year to year in expectations, and die at last with petitions in their hands. Those who raise envy will easily incur censure. I know not whether statesmen and patrons do not suffer more reproaches than they deserve, and may not rather themselves complain, that they are given up a prey to pretensions without merit, and to importunity without shame.

The truth is, that the inconveniences of attendance are more lamented than felt. To the greater number solicitation is its own reward. To be seen in good company, to talk of familiarities with men of power, to be able to tell the freshest news, to gratify an inferior circle with predictions of increase or decline of favour, and to be regarded as a candidate for high offices, are compensations more than equivalent to the delay of favours, which, perhaps,

he that begs them has hardly confidence to expect.

A man, conspicuous in a high station, who multiplies hopes that he may multiply dependents, may be considered as a beast of prey, justly dreaded, but easily avoided; his den is known, and they who would not be devoured, need not approach it. The great danger of the waste of time is from caterpillars and moths, who are not resisted, because they are not feared, and who work on with unheeded mischiefs, and invisible encroachments.

He whose rank or merit procures him the notice of mankind, must give up himself, in a great measure, to the convenience or humour of those who surround him. Every man who is sick of himself will fly to him for relief; he that wants to speak will require him to hear; and he that wants to hear will expect him to speak. Hour passes after hour, the noon succeeds to morning, and the evening to noon, while a thousand objects are forced upon his attention, which he rejects as fast as they are offered, but which the custom of the world requires to be received with appearance of regard.

If we will have the kindness of others, we must endure their follies. He who cannot persuade himself to withdraw from society, must be content to pay a tribute of his time to a multitude of tyrants; to the loiterer, who makes appointments which he never keeps; to the consulter, who asks advice which he never takes; to the boaster who blusters only to be praised; to the complainer, who whines only to be pitied; to the projector, whose happiness is to entertain his friends with expectations which all but himself know to be vain; to the economist, who tells of bargains and settlements; to the politician, who predicts the fate of battles and breach

of alliances; to the usurer, who compares the different funds; and to the talker, who talks only because he loves to be talking.

To put every man in possession of his own time, and rescue the day from the succession of usurpers, is beyond my power, and beyond my hope. Yet, perhaps, some stop might be put to this unmerciful persecution, if all would seriously reflect, that whoever pays a visit that is not desired, or talks longer than the hearer is willing to attend, is guilty of an injury which he cannot repair, and takes away that which he cannot give.

N° 15. SATURDAY, JULY 22, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I HAVE the misfortune to be a man of business; that, you will say is a most grievous one; but what makes it the more so to me is, that my wife has nothing to do: at least she had too good an education, and the prospect of too good a fortune in reversion when I married her, to think of employing herself either in my shop affairs, or the management of my family.

Her time, you know, as well as my own, must be filled up some way or other. For my part, I have enough to mind in weighing my goods out, and

waiting on my customers; but my wife, though she could be of as much use as a shopman to me, if she would put her hand to it, is now only in my way. She walks all the morning sauntering about the shop, with her arms through her pocket-holes, or stands gaping at the door-sill, and looking at every person that passes by. She is continually asking me a thousand frivolous questions about every customer that comes in and goes out; and all the while that I am entering any thing in my day-book, she is lolling over the counter, and staring at it, as if I was only scribbling or drawing figures for her amusement. Sometimes, indeed, she will take a needle; but as she always works at the door, or in the middle of the shop, she has so many interruptions, that she is longer hemming a towel, or darning a stocking, than I am in breaking forty loaves of sugar, and making it up into pounds.

In the afternoon I am sure, likewise, to have her company, except she is called upon by some of her acquaintance: and then, as we let out all the upper part of our house, and have only a little room backwards for ourselves, they either keep such a chattering, or else are calling out every moment to me, that I cannot mind my business for them.

My wife, I am sure, might do all the little matters our family requires; and I could wish that she would employ herself in them; but, instead of that, we have a girl to do the work, and look after a little boy about two years old, which I may fairly say is the mother's own child. The brat must be humoured in every thing: he is, therefore, suffered constantly to play in the shop, pull all the goods about, and clamber up the shelves to get at the plums and sugar. I dare not correct him; because, if I did, I should have wife and maid both

upon me at once. As to the latter she is as lazy and sluttish as her mistress; and because she complains she has too much work, we can scarcely get her to do any thing at all: nay, what is worse than that, I am afraid she is hardly honest; and as she is entrusted to buy in all our provisions, the jade, I am sure, makes a market-penny out of every article.

But to return to my deary.—The evenings are the only time, when it is fine weather, that I am left to myself; for then she generally takes the child out to give it milk in the park. When she comes home again she is so fatigued with walking, that she cannot stir from her chair: and it is an hour after shop is shut, before I can get a bit of supper, while the maid is taken up in undressing and putting the child to bed.

But you will pity me much more when I tell you the manner in which we generally pass our *Sundays*. In the morning she is commonly too ill to dress herself to go to church; she, therefore, never gets up till noon; and what is still more vexatious, keeps me in bed with her, when I ought to be busily engaged in better employment. It is well if she can get her things on by dinner-time; and when that is over, I am sure to be dragged out by her, either to *Georgia*, or *Hornsey Wood*, or the *White-Conduit House*. Yet even these near excursions are so very fatiguing to her, that, besides what it costs me in tea and hot rolls, and syllabubs, and cakes for the boy, I am frequently forced to take a hackney-coach, or drive them home in a one-horse chair. At other times, as my wife is rather of the fattest, and a very poor walker, besides bearing her whole weight upon my arm, I am obliged to carry the child myself.

Thus, Sir, does she constantly drawl out her time, without either profit or satisfaction; and, while I see my neighbour's wives helping in the shop, and almost earning as much as their husbands, I have the mortification to find, that mine is nothing but a dead weight upon me. In short, I do not know any greater misfortune can happen to a plain hard-working tradesman, as I am, than to be joined to such a woman, who is rather a clog than an helpmate to him.

I am, SIR,

Your humble servant,

ZACHARY TREACLE.

N° 16. SATURDAY, JULY 29, 1758.

I PAID a visit yesterday to my old friend *Ned Drugget*, at his country lodgings. *Ned* began trade with a very small fortune; he took a small house in an obscure street, and for some years dealt only in remnants. Knowing that *light gains make a heavy purse*, he was content with moderate profit; having observed or heard the effects of civility, he bowed down to the counter-edge at the entrance and departure of every customer, listened without impatience to the objections of the ignorant, and refused without resentment the offers of the penurious. His only recreation was, to stand at his own door and look into the street. His dinner was sent him from a neigh-

bouring alehouse, and he opened and shut the shop at a certain hour with his own hands.

His reputation soon extended from one end of the street to the other; and Mr. *Drugget*'s exemplary conduct was recommended by every master to his apprentice, and by every father to his son. *Ned* was not only considered as a thriving trader, but as a man of elegance and politeness, for he was remarkably neat in his dress, and would wear his coat threadbare without spotting it; his hat was always brushed, his shoes glossy, his wig nicely curled, and his stockings without a wrinkle. With such qualifications it was not very difficult for him to gain the heart of Miss *Comfit*, the only daughter of Mr. *Comfit* the confectioner.

Ned is one of those whose happiness marriage has increased. His wife had the same disposition with himself; and his method of life was very little changed, except that he dismissed the lodgers from the first floor, and took the whole house into his own hands.

He had already, by his parsimony, accumulated a considerable sum, to which the fortune of his wife was now added. From this time he began to grasp at greater acquisitions, and was always ready with money in his hand, to pick up the refuse of a sale, or to buy the stock of a trader who retired from business. He soon added his parlour to his shop, and was obliged, a few months afterwards, to hire a warehouse.

He had now a shop splendidly and copiously furnished with every thing that time had injured, or fashion had degraded, with fragments of tissues, odd yards of brocade, vast bales of faded silk, and innumerable boxes of antiquated ribbons. His shop was soon celebrated through all quarters of the town, and frequented by every form of ostentatious poverty.

Every maid, whose misfortune it was to be taller than her lady, matched her gown at Mr. *Drugget*'s; and many a maiden, who had passed a winter with her aunt in *London*, dazzled the rustics, at her return, with cheap finery which *Drugget* had supplied. His shop was often visited in a morning by ladies who left their coaches in the next street, and crept through the alley in linen gowns. *Drugget* knows the rank of his customers by their bashfulness; and when he finds them unwilling to be seen, invites them up stairs, or retires with them to the back window.

I rejoiced at the increasing prosperity of my friend, and imagined, that as he grew rich, he was growing happy. His mind has partaken the enlargement of his fortune. When I stepped in for the first five years, I was welcomed only with a shake of the hand; in the next period of his life, he beckoned across the way for a pot of beer; but for six years past, he invited me to dinner; and if he bespeaks me the day before, never fails to regale me with a fillet of veal.

His riches neither made him uncivil nor negligent; he rose at the same hour, attended with the same assiduity, and bowed with the same gentleness. But for some years he has been much inclined to talk of the fatigues of business, and the confinement of a shop, and to wish that he had been so happy as to have renewed his uncle's lease of a farm, that he might have lived without noise and hurry, in a pure air, in the artless society of honest villagers, and the contemplation of the works of nature.

I soon discovered the cause of my friend's philosophy. He thought himself grown rich enough to have a lodging in the country, like the mercers on *Ludgate-hill*, and was resolved to enjoy himself in the decline of life. This was a revolution not to be

made suddenly. He talked three years of the pleasures of the country, but passed every night over his own shop. But at last he resolved to be happy, and hired a lodging in the country, that he may steal some hours in the week from business; for, says he, *when a man advances in life, he loves to entertain himself sometimes with his own thoughts.*

I was invited to this seat of quiet and contemplation among those whom Mr. *Drugget* considers as his most reputable friends, and desires to make the first witnesses of his elevation to the highest dignities of a shopkeeper. I found him at *Islington*, in a room which overlooked the high road, amusing himself with looking through the window, which the clouds of dust would not suffer him to open. He embraced me, told me I was welcome into the country, and asked me, if I did not feel myself refreshed. He then desired that dinner might be hastened, for fresh air always sharpened his appetite, and ordered me a toast and a glass of wine after my walk. He told me much of the pleasure he found in retirement, and wondered what had kept him so long out of the country. After dinner, company came in, and Mr. *Drugget* again repeated the praises of the country, recommended the pleasures of meditation, and told them, that he had been all the morning at the window, counting the carriages as they passed before him.

N° 17. SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 1758.

THE rainy weather, which has continued the last month, is said to have given great disturbance to the inspectors of barometers. The oraculous glasses have deceived their votaries; shower has succeeded shower, though they predicted sun-shine and dry skies; and by fatal confidence in these fallacious promises, many coats have lost their gloss, and many curls have been moistened to flaccidity.

This is one of the distresses to which mortals subject themselves by the pride of speculation. I had no part in this learned disappointment, who am content to credit my senses, and to believe that rain will fall when the air blackens, and that the weather will be dry when the sun is bright. My caution indeed does not always preserve me from a shower. To be wet, may happen to the genuine *Idler;* but to be wet in opposition to theory, can befal only the *Idler* that pretends to be busy. Of those that spin out life in trifles and die without a memorial, many flatter themselves with high opinions of their own importance, and imagine that they are every day adding some improvement to human life. To be idle and to be poor, have always been reproaches, and therefore every man endeavours, with his utmost care, to hide his poverty from others, and his *idleness* from himself.

Among those whom I never could persuade to rank themselves with *Idlers*, and who speak with indignation of my morning sleeps and nocturnal rambles, one passes the day in catching spiders, that he may

count their eyes with a microscope; another erects his head, and exhibits the dust of a marigold separated from the flower with a dexterity worthy of *Leuwenhoeck* himself. Some turn the wheel of electricity: some suspend rings to a load-stone, and find that what they did yesterday they can do again today. Some register the changes of the wind, and die fully convinced that the wind is changeable.

There are men yet more profound, who have heard that two colourless liquors may produce a colour by union, and that two cold bodies will grow hot if they are mingled; they mingle them, and produce the effect expected, say it is strange, and mingle them again.

The *Idlers* that sport only with inanimate nature may claim some indulgence; if they are useless, they are still innocent: but there are others, whom I know not how to mention without more emotion than my love of quiet willingly admits. Among the inferior professors of medical knowledge, is a race of wretches, whose lives are only varied by varieties of cruelty; whose favourite amusement is, to nail dogs to tables and open them alive; to try how long life may be continued in various degrees of mutilation, or with the excision or laceration of the vital parts; to examine whether burning-irons are felt more acutely by the bone or tendon; and whether the more lasting agonies are produced by poison forced into the mouth, or injected into the veins.

It is not without reluctance that I offend the sensibility of the tender mind with images like these. If such cruelties were not practised, it were to be desired that they should not be conceived; but, since they are published every day with ostentation, let me be allowed once to mention them, since I mention them with abhorrence.

Mead has invidiously remarked of *Woodward*, that

he gathered shells and stones, and would pass for a philosopher. With pretensions much less reasonable, the anatomical novice tears out the living bowels of an animal, and styles himself physician, prepares himself by familiar cruelty for that profession which he is to exercise upon the tender and the helpless, upon feeble bodies and broken minds, and by which he has opportunities to extend his arts of torture, and continue those experiments upon infancy and age, which he has hitherto tried upon cats and dogs.

What is alleged in defence of these hateful practices, every one knows; but the truth is, that by knives, fire, and poison, knowledge is not always sought, and is very seldom attained. The experiments that have been tried, are tried again; he that burned an animal with irons yesterday, will be willing to amuse himself with burning another to-morrow. I know not, that by living dissections any discovery has been made by which a single malady is more easily cured. And if the knowledge of physiology has been somewhat increased, he surely buys knowledge dear, who learns the use of the lacteals at the expense of his humanity. It is time that universal resentment should arise against these horrid operations, which tend to harden the heart, extinguish those sensations which give man confidence in man, and make the physician more dreadful than the gout or stone.

N° 18. SATURDAY, AUGUST 12, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

It commonly happens to him who endeavours to obtain distinction by ridicule, or censure, that he teaches others to practise his own arts against himself; and that, after a short enjoyment of the applause paid to his sagacity, or of the mirth excited by his wit, he is doomed to suffer the same severities of scrutiny, to hear inquiry detecting his faults, and exaggeration sporting with his failings.

The natural discontent of inferiority will seldom fail to operate in some degree of malice against him who professes to superintend the conduct of others, especially if he seats himself uncalled in the chair of judicature, and exercises authority by his own commission.

You cannot, therefore, wonder that your observations on human folly, if they produce laughter at one time, awaken criticism at another; and that among the numbers whom you have taught to scoff at the retirement of *Drugget*, there is one who offers his apology.

The mistake of your old friend is by no means peculiar. The public pleasures of far the greater part of mankind are counterfeit. Very few carry their philosophy to places of diversion, or are very careful to analyse their enjoyments. The general condition of life is so full of misery, that we are glad

to catch delight without inquiring whence it comes, or by what power it is bestowed.

The mind is seldom quickened to very vigorous operations but by pain, or the dread of pain. We do not disturb ourselves with the detection of fallacies which do us no harm, nor willingly decline a pleasing effect to investigate its cause. He that is happy, by whatever means, desires nothing but the continuance of happiness, and is no more solicitous to distribute his sensations into their proper species, than the common gazer on the beauties of the spring to separate light into its original rays.

Pleasure is therefore seldom such as it appears to others, nor often such as we represent it to ourselves. Of the ladies that sparkle at a musical performance, a very small number has any quick sensibility of harmonious sounds. But every one that goes has her pleasure. She has the pleasure of wearing fine clothes, and of showing them, of outshining those whom she suspects to envy her; she has the pleasure of appearing among other ladies in a place whither the race of meaner mortals seldom intrudes, and of reflecting that, in the conversations of the next morning, her name will be mentioned among those that sat in the first row; she has the pleasure of returning courtesies, or refusing to return them, of receiving compliments with civility, or rejecting them with disdain. She has the pleasure of meeting some of her acquaintance, of guessing why the rest are absent, and of telling them that she saw the opera, on pretence of inquiring why they would miss it. She has the pleasure of being supposed to be pleased with a refined amusement, and of hoping to be numbered among the votresses of harmony. She has the pleasure of escaping for two hours the superiority of a sister, or the control of a husband; and from all

these pleasures she concludes, that heavenly music is the balm of life.

All assemblies of gaiety are brought together by motives of the same kind. The theatre is not filled with those that know or regard the skill of the actor, nor the ball-room by those who dance, or attend to the dancers. To all places of general resort, where the standard of pleasure is erected, we run with equal eagerness, or appearance of eagerness, for very different reasons. One goes that he may say he has been there, another because he never misses. This man goes to try what he can find, and that to discover what others find. Whatever diversion is costly will be frequented by those who desire to be thought rich; and whatever has, by any accident, become fashionable, easily continues its reputation, because every one is ashamed of not partaking it.

To every place of entertainment we go with expectation and desire of being pleased; we meet others who are brought by the same motives; no one will be the first to own the disappointment; one face reflects the smile of another, till each believes the rest delighted, and endeavours to catch and transmit the circulating rapture. In time all are deceived by the cheat to which all contribute. The fiction of happiness is propagated by every tongue, and confirmed by every look, till at last all profess the joy which they do not feel, consent to yield to the general delusion; and when the voluntary dream is at an end, lament that bliss is of so short a duration.

If *Drugget* pretended to pleasures of which he had no perception, or boasted of one amusement where he was indulging another, what did he which is not done by all those who read his story? of whom some pretend delight in conversation, only because they dare not be alone; some praise the quiet of solitude,

because they are envious of sense, and impatient of folly; and some gratify their pride, by writing characters which expose the vanity of life.

I am, SIR,

Your humble Servant.

N° 19. SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1758.

SOME of those ancient sages that have exercised their abilities in the inquiry after the *supreme good*, have been of opinion, that the highest degree of earthly happiness is quiet; a calm repose both of mind and body, undisturbed by the sight of folly or the noise of business, the tumults of public commotion, or the agitations of private interest; a state in which the mind has no other employment, but to observe and regulate her own motions, to trace thought from thought, combine one image with another, raise systems of science, and form theories of virtue.

To the scheme of these solitary speculatists, it has been justly objected, that if they are happy, they are happy only by being useless. That mankind is one vast republic, where every individual receives many benefits from the labours of others, which, by labouring in his turn for others, he is obliged to repay; and that where the united efforts of all are not able to exempt all from misery, none have a right to withdraw from their task of vigilance, or to be indulged in idle wisdom or solitary pleasures.

It is common for controvertists, in the heat of disputation, to add one position to another till they reach the extremities of knowledge, where truth and falsehood lose their distinction. Their admirers follow them to the brink of absurdity, and then start back from each side towards the middle point. So it has happened in this great disquisition. Many perceive alike the force of the contrary arguments, find quiet shameful, and business dangerous, and therefore pass their lives between them, in bustle without business, and negligence without quiet.

Among the principal names of this moderate set is that great philosopher *Jack Whirler*, whose business keeps him in perpetual motion, and whose motion always eludes his business; who is always to do what he never does, who cannot stand still because he is wanted in another place, and who is wanted in many places because he stays in none.

Jack has more business than he can conveniently transact in one house; he has therefore one habitation near *Bow-Church*, and another about a mile distant. By this ingenious distribution of himself between two houses, *Jack* has contrived to be found at neither. *Jack*'s trade is extensive, and he has many dealers; his conversation is sprightly, and he has many companions; his disposition is kind, and he has many friends *Jack* neither forbears pleasure for business, nor omits business for pleasure, but is equally invisible to his friends and his customers; to him that comes with an invitation to a club, and to him that waits to settle an account.

When you call at his house, his clerk tells you, that Mr. *Whirler* has just stept out, but will be at home exactly at two; you wait at a coffee-house till two, and then find that he has been at home, and is gone out again, but left word that he should be at the *Half-moon* tavern at seven, where he hopes to meet

you. At seven you go to the tavern. At eight in comes Mr. *Whirler* to tell you, that he is glad to see you, and only begs leave to run for a few minutes to a gentleman that lives near the *Exchange*, from whom he will return before supper can be ready. Away he runs to the *Exchange*, to tell those who are waiting for him, that he must beg them to defer the business till to-morrow, because his time is come at the *Half-moon*.

Jack's cheerfulness and civility rank him among those whose presence never gives pain, and whom all receive with fondness and caresses. He calls often on his friends to tell them, that he will come again to-morrow; on the morrow he comes again, to tell them how an unexpected summons hurries him away.—When he enters a house, his first declaration is, that he cannot sit down; and so short are his visits, that he seldom appears to have come for any other reason but to say, He must go.

The dogs of *Egypt*, when thirst brings them to the *Nile*, are said to run as they drink for fear of the crocodiles. *Jack Whirler* always dines at full speed. He enters, finds the family at table, sits familiarly down, and fills his plate; but while the first morsel is in his mouth, hears the clock strike, and rises; then goes to another house, sits down again, recollects another engagement; has only time to taste the soup, makes a short excuse to the company, and continues through another street his desultory dinner.

But, overwhelmed as he is with business, his chief desire is to have still more. Every new proposal takes possession of his thoughts; he soon balances probabilities, engages in the project, brings it almost to completion, and then forsakes it for another, which he catches with some alacrity, urges with the same vehemence, and abandons with the same coldness.

Every man may be observed to have a certain strain of lamentation, some peculiar theme of complaint on which he dwells in his moments of dejection. *Jack*'s topic of sorrow is his want of time. Many an excellent design languishes in empty theory for want of time. For the omission of any civilities, want of time is his plea to others; for the neglect of any affairs, want of time is his excuse to himself. That he wants time he sincerely believes; for he once pined away many months with a lingering distemper, for want of time to attend to his health.

Thus *Jack Whirler* lives in perpetual fatigues without proportionate advantage, because he does not consider that no man can see all with his own eyes, or do all with his own hands; that whoever is engaged in multiplicity of business, must transact much by substitution, and leave something to hazard; and that he who attempts to do all, will waste his life in doing little.

N° 20. SATURDAY, AUGUST 26, 1758.

THERE is no crime more infamous than the violation of truth. It is apparent that men can be social beings no longer than they believe each other. When speech is employed only as the vehicle of falsehood, every man must disunite himself from others, inhabit his own cave, and seek prey only for himself.

Yet the law of truth, thus sacred and necessary, is broken without punishment, without censure, in

compliance with inveterate prejudice and prevailing passions. Men are willing to credit what they wish, and encourage rather those who gratify them with pleasures, than those that instruct them with fidelity.

For this reason every historian discovers his country; and it is impossible to read the different accounts of any great event, without a wish that truth had more power over partiality.

Amidst the joy of my countrymen for the acquisition of *Louisbourg*, I could not forbear to consider how differently this revolution of *American* power is not only now mentioned by the contending nations, but will be represented by the writers of another century.

The *English* historian will imagine himself barely doing justice to *English* virtue, when he relates the capture of *Louisbourg* in the following manner:—

"The *English* had hitherto seen, with great indignation their attempts baffled and their force defied by an enemy, whom they considered themselves as entitled to conquer by the right of prescription, and whom many ages of hereditary superiority had taught them to despise. Their fleets were more numerous, and their seamen braver, than those of *France;* yet they only floated useless on the ocean, and the *French* derided them from their ports. Misfortunes, as is usual, produced discontent, the people murmured at the ministers, and the ministers censured the commanders.

"In the summer of this year, the *English* began to find their success answerable to their cause. A fleet and an army were sent to *America* to dislodge the enemies from the settlements which they had so perfidiously made, and so insolently

" maintained, and to repress that power which was " growing more every day by the association of the " *Indians* with whom these degenerate *Europeans* " intermarried, and whom they secured to their " party by presents and promises.

" In the beginning of *June* the ships of war and " vessels containing the land-forces appeared before " *Louisbourg*, a place so secure by nature that art " was almost superfluous, and yet fortified by art " as if nature had left it open. The *French* boasted " that it was impregnable, and spoke with scorn " of all attempts that could be made against it. " The garrison was numerous, the stores equal to " the longest siege, and their engineers and com- " manders high in reputation. The mouth of the " harbour was so narrow, that three ships within " might easily defend it against all attacks from " the sea. The *French* had, with that caution " which cowards borrow from fear, and attribute to " policy, eluded our fleets, and sent into that " port five great ships and six smaller, of which " they sunk four in the mouth of the passage, " having raised batteries and posted troops at all " the places where they thought it possible to make " a descent. The *English*, however, had more to " dread from the roughness of the sea, than from " the skill or bravery of the defendants. Some " days passed before the surges, which rise very " high round that island, would suffer them to " land. At last their impatience could be re- " strained no longer; they got possession of the " shore with little loss by the sea, and with less by " the enemy. In a few days the artillery was land- " ed, the batteries were raised, and the *French* had " no other hope than to escape from one post to " another. A shot from the batteries fired the " powder in one of their largest ships, the flame

" spread to the two next, and all three were de-
" stroyed; the *English* admiral sent his boats against
" the two large ships yet remaining, took them
" without resistance, and terrified the garrison to an
" immediate capitulation."

Let us now oppose to this *English* narrative the relation which will be produced, about the same time, by the writer of the age of *Louis* XV.

" About this time the *English* admitted to the
" conduct of affairs a man who undertook to save
" from destruction that ferocious and turbulent
" people, who, from the mean insolence of wealthy
" traders, and the lawless confidence of successful
" robbers, were now sunk in despair and stupified
" with horror. He called in the ships which had
" been dispersed over the ocean to guard their mer-
" chants, and sent a fleet and an army, in which
" almost the whole strength of *England* was com-
" prised, to secure their possessions in *America*,
" which were endangered alike by the *French* arms
" and the *French* virtue. We had taken the *English*
" fortresses by force, and gained the *Indian* nations
" by humanity. The *English*, wherever they come,
" are sure to have the natives for their enemies; for,
" the only motive of their settlements is avarice,
" and the only consequence of their success is op-
" pression. In this war they acted like other bar-
" barians, and, with a degree of outrageous cruelty,
" which the gentleness of our manners scarcely
" suffers us to conceive, offered rewards by
" open proclamation to those who should bring
" in the scalps of *Indian* women and children. A
" trader always makes war with the cruelty of a
" pirate

" They had long looked with envy and with ter-
" ror upon the influence which the *French* exerted
" over all the northern regions of *America* by the

" possession of *Louisbourg*, a place naturally strong,
" and new fortified with some slight outworks.
" They hoped to surprise the garrison unprovided;
" but that sluggishness which always defeats their
" malice, gave us time to send supplies, and to
" station ships for the defence of the harbour.
" They came before *Louisbourg* in *June*, and were
" for some time in doubt whether they should land.
" But the commanders, who had lately seen an ad-
" miral beheaded for not having done what he had
" not power to do, durst not leave the place un-
" assaulted. An *Englishman* has no ardour for ho-
" nour, nor zeal for duty; he neither values glory
" nor loves his king, but balances one danger with
" another, and will fight rather than be hanged.
" They therefore landed, but with great loss; their
" engineers had, in the last war with the *French*,
" learned something of the military science, and
" made their approaches with sufficient skill; but
" all their efforts had been without effect, had not a
" ball unfortunately fallen into the powder of one of
" our ships, which communicated the fire to the
" rest, and, by opening the passage of the harbour,
" obliged the garrison to capitulate. Thus was
" *Louisbourg* lost, and our troops marched out with
" the admiration of their enemies, who durst hardly
" think themselves masters of the place."

N° 21. SATURDAY, SEPT. 2, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

DEAR MR. IDLER;

THERE is a species of misery, or of disease, for which our language is commonly supposed to be without a name, but which I think is emphatically enough denominated *listlessness*, and which is commonly termed a want of something to do.

Of the unhappiness of this state I do not expect all your readers to have an adequate idea. Many are overburthened with business, and can imagine no comfort but in rest; many have minds so placid, as willingly to indulge a voluntary lethargy; or so narrow, as easily to be filled to their utmost capacity. By these I shall not be understood, and therefore cannot be pitied. Those only will sympathise with my complaint, whose imagination is active and resolution weak, whose desires are ardent, and whose choise is delicate; who cannot satisfy themselves with standing still, and yet cannot find a motive to direct their course.

I was the second son of a gentleman, whose estate was barely sufficient to support himself and his heir in the dignity of killing game. He therefore made use of the interest which the alliances of his family afforded him, to procure me a post in the army. I passed some years in the most contemptible of all human stations, that of a soldier in time of peace. I wandered with the regiment as the quarters were

changed, without opportunity for business, taste for knowledge, or money for pleasure. Wherever I came, I was for some time a stranger without curiosity, and afterwards an acquaintance without friendship. Having nothing to hope in these places of fortuitous residence, I resigned my conduct to chance; I had no intention to offend, I had no ambition to delight.

I suppose every man is shocked when he hears how frequently soldiers are wishing for war. The wish is not always sincere; the greater part are content with sleep and lace, and counterfeit an ardour which they do not feel; but those who desire it most are neither prompted by malevolence nor patriotism; they neither pant for laurels nor delight in blood; but long to be delivered from the tyranny of idleness, and restored to the dignity of active beings.

I never imagined myself to have more courage than other men, yet was often involuntarily wishing for a war, but of a war at that time I had no prospect; and being enabled, by the death of an uncle, to live without my pay, I quitted the army, and resolved to regulate my own motions.

I was pleased, for a while, with the novelty of independence, and imagined that I had now found what every man desires. My time was in my own power, and my habitation was wherever my choice should fix it. I amused myself for two years in passing from place to place, and comparing one convenience with another; but being at last ashamed of inquiry, and weary of uncertainty, I purchased a house, and established my family.

I now expected to begin to be happy, and was happy for a short time with that expectation. But I soon perceived my spirits to subside, and my imagination to grow dark. The gloom thickened every day around me. I wondered by what malignant

power my peace was blasted, till I discovered at last that I had nothing to do.

Time, with all its celerity, moves slowly to him whose whole employment is to watch its flight. I am forced upon a thousand shifts to enable me to endure the tediousness of the day. I rise when I can sleep no longer, and take my morning walk; I see what I have seen before, and return. I sit down and persuade myself that I sit down to think, find it impossible to think without a subject, rise up to inquire after news, and endeavour to kindle in myself an artificial impatience for intelligence of events, which will never extend any consequence to me, but that a few minutes they abstract me from myself.

When I have heard any thing that may gratify curiosity, I am busied for a while in running to relate it. I hasten from one place of concourse to another, delighted with my own importance, and proud to think that I am doing something, though I know that another hour would spare my labour.

I had once a round of visits, which I paid very regularly; but I have now tired most of my friends. When I have sat down I forget to rise, and have more than once overheard one asking another when I would be gone. I perceive the company tired, I observe the mistress of the family whispering to her servants, I find orders given to put off business till to-morrow, I see the watches frequently inspected, and yet cannot withdraw to the vacuity of solitude, or venture myself in my own company.

Thus burthensome to myself and others, I form many schemes of employment which may make my life useful or agreeable, and exempt me from the ignominy of living by sufferance. This new course I have long designed, but have not yet begun. The present moment is never proper for the change, but

there is always a time in view when all obstacles will be removed, and I shall surprise all that know me with a new distribution of my time. Twenty years have passed since I have resolved a complete amendment, and twenty years have been lost in delays. Age is coming upon me; and I should look back with rage and despair upon the waste of life, but that I am now beginning in earnest to begin a reformation.

I am, SIR,
Your humble servant,
DICK LINGER.

N° 22. SATURDAY, SEPT. 16, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

As I was passing lately under one of the gates of this city, I was struck with horror by a rueful cry which summoned me to *remember the poor debtors.*

The wisdom and justice of the *English* laws are, by *Englishmen* at least, loudly celebrated: but scarcely the most zealous admirers of our institutions can think that law wise, which, when men are capable of work, obliges them to beg; or just, which exposes the liberty of one to the passions of another.

The prosperity of a people is proportionate to the number of hands and minds usefully employed. To the community, sedition is a fever, corruption is a gangrene, and idleness is an atrophy. Whatever

body, and whatever society wastes more than it acquires, must gradually decay; and every being that continues to be fed, and ceases to labour, takes away something from the public stock.

The confinement, therefore, of any man in the sloth and darkness of a prison, is a loss to the nation, and no gain to the creditor. For of the multitudes who are pining in those cells of misery, a very small part is suspected of any fraudulent act by which they retain what belongs to others. The rest are imprisoned by the wantonness of pride, the malignity of revenge, or the acrimony of disappointed expectation.

If those, who thus rigorously exercise the power which the law has put into their hands, be asked, why they continue to imprison those whom they know to be unable to pay them? one will answer, that his debtor once lived better than himself; another, that his wife looked above her neighbours, and his children went in silk clothes to the dancing-school; and another, that he pretended to be a joker and a wit. Some will reply, that if they were in debt, they should meet with the same treatment; some, that they owe no more than they can pay, and need therefore give no account of their actions. Some will confess their resolution that their debtors shall rot in gaol; and some will discover, that they hope, by cruelty, to wring the payment from their friends.

The end of all civil regulations is, to secure private happiness from private malignity; to keep individuals from the power of one another; but this end is apparently neglected, when a man, irritated with loss, is allowed to be the judge of his own cause, and to assign the punishment of his own pain; when the distinction between guilt and happiness, between ca-

sualty and design, is entrusted to eyes blind with interest, to understandings depraved by resentment.

Since poverty is punished among us as a crime, it ought at least to be treated with the same lenity as other crimes: the offender ought not to languish at the will of him whom he has offended, but to be allowed some appeal to the justice of his country. There can be no reason why any debtor should be imprisoned, but that he may be compelled to payment; and a term should therefore be fixed, in which the creditor should exhibit his accusation of concealed property. If such property can be discovered, let it be given to the creditor; if the charge is not offered, or cannot be proved, let the prisoner be dismissed.

Those who made the laws have apparently supposed, that every deficiency of payment is the crime of the debtor. But the truth is, that the creditor always shares the act, and often more than shares the guilt, of improper trust. It seldom happens that any man imprisons another but for debts which he suffered to be contracted in hope of advantage to himself, and for bargains in which he proportioned his profit to his own opinion of the hazard; and there is no reason why one should punish the other for a contract in which both concurred.

Many of the inhabitants of prisons may justly complain of harder treatment. He that once owes more than he can pay, is often obliged to bribe his creditor to patience, by increasing his debt. Worse and worse commodities, at a higher and higher price, are forced upon him; he is impoverished by compulsive traffic, and at last overwhelmed, in the common receptacles of misery, by debts, which, without his own consent, were accumulated on his head. To the relief of this distress, no other objection can be made, but that by an easy dissolution of debts, fraud

will be left without punishment, and imprudence without awe; and that when insolvency should be no longer punishable, credit will cease.

The motive to credit, is the hope of advantage. Commerce can never be at a stop, while one man wants what another can supply; and credit will never be denied, while it is likely to be repaid with profit. He that trusts one whom he designs to sue, is criminal by the act of trust: the cessation of such insidious traffic is to be desired, and no reason can be given why a change of the law should impair any other.

We see nation trade with nation, where no payment can be compelled. Mutual convenience produces mutual confidence; and the merchants continue to satisfy the demands of each other, though they have nothing to dread but the loss of trade.

It is vain to continue an institution, which experience shows to be ineffectual. We have now imprisoned one generation of debtors after another, but we do not find that their numbers lessen. We have now learned, that rashness and imprudence will not be deterred from taking credit; let us try whether fraud and avarice may be more easily restrained from giving it.

I am, SIR, &c.

N° 23. SATURDAY, SEPT. 23, 1758.

LIFE has no pleasure higher or nobler than that of friendship. It is painful to consider, that this sublime enjoyment may be impaired or destroyed by innumerable causes, and that there is no human possession of which the duration is less certain.

Many have talked, in very exalted language, of the perpetuity of friendship, of invincible constancy, and unalienable kindness; and some examples have been seen of men who have continued faithful to their earliest choice, and whose affection has predominated over changes of fortune, and contrariety of opinion.

But these instances are memorable, because they are rare. The friendship which is to be practised or expected by common mortals, must take its rise from mutual pleasure, and must end when the power ceases of delighting each other.

Many accidents therefore may happen, by which the ardour of kindness will be abated, without criminal baseness or contemptible inconstancy on either part. To give pleasure is not always in our power; and little does he know himself, who believes that he can be always able to receive it.

Those who would gladly pass their days together may be separated by the different course of their affairs: and friendship, like love, is destroyed by long absence, though it may be increased by short intermissions. What we have missed long enough to want it, we value more when it is regained; but that which has been lost till it is forgotten, will be

found at last with little gladness, and with still less, if a substitute has supplied the place. A man deprived of the companion to whom he used to open his bosom, and with whom he shared the hours of leisure and merriment, feels the day at first hanging heavy on him; his difficulties oppress, and his doubts distract him; he sees time come and go without his wonted gratification, and all is sadness within, and solitude about him. But this uneasiness never lasts long; necessity produces expedients, new amusements are discovered, and new conversation is admitted.

No expectation is more frequently disappointed, than that which naturally arises in the mind from the prospect of meeting an old friend after long separation. We expect the attraction to be revived, and the coalition to be renewed; no man considers how much alteration time has made in himself, and very few inquire what effect it has had upon others. The first hour convinces them, that the pleasure which they have formerly enjoyed, is for ever at an end; different scenes have made different impressions; the opinions of both are changed; and that similitude of manners and sentiment is lost, which confirmed them both in the approbation of themselves.

Friendship is often destroyed by opposition of interest, not only by the ponderous and visible interest which the desire of wealth and greatness forms and maintains, but by a thousand secret and slight competitions, scarcely known to the mind upon which they operate. There is scarcely any man without some favourite trifle which he values above greater attainments, some desire of petty praise which he cannot patiently suffer to be frustrated. This minute ambition is sometimes crossed before it is known, and sometimes defeated by wanton petu-

lance; but such attacks are seldom made without the loss of friendship; for whoever has once found the vulnerable part will always be feared, and the resentment will burn on in secret, of which shame hinders the discovery.

This, however, is a slow malignity, which a wise man will obviate as inconsistent with quiet, and a good man will repress as contrary to virtue; but human happiness is sometimes violated by some more sudden strokes.

A dispute begun in jest upon a subject which a moment before was on both parts regarded with careless indifference, is continued by the desire of conquest, till vanity kindles into rage, and opposition rankles into enmity. Against this hasty mischief, I know not what security can be obtained; men will be sometimes surprised into quarrels; and though they might both hasten to reconciliation, as soon as their tumult had subsided, yet two minds will seldom be found together, which can at once subdue their discontent, or immediately enjoy the sweets of peace, without remembering the wounds of the conflict.

Friendship has other enemies. Suspicion is always hardening the cautious, and disgust repelling the delicate. Very slender differences will sometimes part those whom long reciprocation of civility or beneficence has united. *Lonelove* and *Ranger* retired into the country to enjoy the company of each other, and returned in six weeks cold and petulant: *Ranger*'s pleasure was, to walk in the fields, and *Lonelove*'s to sit in a bower; each had complied with the other in his turn, and each was angry that compliance had been exacted.

The most fatal disease of friendship is gradual decay, or dislike hourly increased by causes too slender for complaint and too numerous for removal.—

Those who are angry may be reconciled; those who have been injured may receive a recompence; but when the desire of pleasing and willingness to be pleased is silently diminished, the renovation of friendship is hopeless; as, when the vital powers sink into languor, there is no longer any use of the physician.

N° 24. SATURDAY, SEPT. 30, 1758.

When man sees one of the inferior creatures perched upon a tree, or basking in the sunshine, without any apparent endeavour or pursuit, he often asks himself, or his companion, *On what that animal can be supposed to be thinking?*

Of this question, since neither bird nor beast can answer it, we must be content to live without the resolution. We know not how much the brutes recollect of the past, or anticipate of the future; what power they have of comparing and preferring; or whether their faculties may not rest in motionless indifference, till they are moved by the presence of their proper object, or stimulated to act by corporal sensations.

I am the less inclined to these superfluous inquiries, because I have always been able to find sufficient matter for curiosity in my own species. It is useless to go far in quest of that which may be found at home; a very narrow circle of observation will supply a sufficient number of men and women, who might be asked, with equal propriety, *On what they can be thinking?*

It is reasonable to believe, that thought, like every

thing else, has its causes and effects; that it must proceed from something known, done, or suffered; and must produce some action or event. Yet how great is the number of those in whose minds no source of thought has ever been opened, in whose life no thought of consequence is ever discovered; who have learned nothing upon which they can reflect; who have neither seen nor felt any thing which could leave its traces on the memory; who neither foresee nor desire any change of their condition, and have therefore neither fear, hope, nor design, and yet are supposed to be thinking beings.

To every act a subject is required. He that thinks, must think upon something. But tell me, ye that pierce deepest into nature, ye that take the widest surveys of life, inform me, kind shades of *Malbranche* and of *Locke*, what that something can be, which excites and continues thought in maiden aunts with small fortunes; in younger brothers that live upon annuities; in traders retired from business; in soldiers absent from their regiments; or in widows that have no children?

Life is commonly considered as either active or contemplative; but surely this division, how long soever it has been received, is inadequate and fallacious. There are mortals whose life is certainly not active, for they do neither good nor evil; and whose life cannot be properly called contemplative, for they never attend either to the conduct of men, or the works of nature, but rise in the morning, look round them till night in careless stupidity, go to bed and sleep, and rise again in the morning.

It has been lately a celebrated question in the schools of philosophy, *Whether the soul always thinks?* Some have defined the soul to be the *power of thinking*; concluded that its essence consists in act; that, if it should cease to act, it would cease to be; and

that cessation of thought is but another name for extinction of mind. This argument is subtle, but not conclusive; because it supposes what cannot be proved, that the nature of mind is properly defined. Others affect to disdain subtilty, when subtilty will not serve their purpose, and appeal to daily experience. We spend many hours, they say, in sleep, without the least remembrance of any thoughts which then passed in our minds; and since we can only by our own consciousness be sure that we think, why should we imagine that we have had thought of which no consciousness remains?

This argument, which appeals to experience, may from experience be confuted. We every day do something which we forget when it is done, and know to have been done only by consequence. The waking hours are not denied to have been passed in thought; yet he that shall endeavour to recollect on one day the ideas of the former, will only turn the eye of reflection upon vacancy; he will find, that the greater part is irrevocably vanished, and wonder how the moments could come and go, and leave so little behind them.

To discover only that the arguments on both sides are defective, and to throw back the tenet into its former uncertainty, is the sport of wanton or malevolent scepticism, delighting to see the sons of philosophy at work upon a task which never can be decided. I shall suggest an argument hitherto overlooked, which may perhaps determine the controversy.

If it be impossible to think without materials, there must necessarily be minds that do not always think; and whence shall we furnish materials for the meditation of the glutton between his meals, of the sportsman in a rainy month, of the annuitant between

the days of quarterly payment, of the politician when the mails are detained by contrary winds?

But how frequent soever may be the examples of existence without thought, it is certainly a state not much to be desired. He that lives in torpid insensibility, wants nothing of a carcase but putrefaction. It is the part of every inhabitant of the earth to partake the pains and pleasures of his fellow-beings: and, as in a road through a country desart and uniform, the traveller languishes for want of amusement, so the passage of life will be tedious and irksome to him who does not beguile it by diversified ideas.

N° 25. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I AM a very constant frequenter of the playhouse, a place to which I suppose the *Idler* not much a stranger, since he can have no where else so much entertainment with so little concurrence of his own endeavour. At all other assemblies, he that comes to receive delight, will be expected to give it; but in the theatre nothing is necessary to the amusement of two hours, but to sit down and be willing to be pleased.

The last week has offered two new actors to the town. The appearance and retirement of actors are the great events of the theatrical world; and their first performance fill the pit with conjecture and

prognostication, as the first actions of a new monarch agitate nations with hope or fear.

What opinion I have formed of the future excellence of these candidates for dramatic glory, it is not necessary to declare. Their entrance gave me a higher and nobler pleasure than any borrowed character can afford. I saw the ranks of the theatre emulating each other in candour and humanity, and contending who should most effectually assist the struggles of endeavour, dissipate the blush of diffidence, and still the flutter of timidity.

This behaviour is such as becomes a people, too tender to repress those who wish to please, too generous to insult those who can make no resistance. A public performer is so much in the power of spectators, that all unnecessary severity is restrained by that general law of humanity which forbids us to be cruel where there is nothing to be feared.

In every new performer something must be pardoned. No man can, by any force of resolution, secure to himself the full possession of his own powers under the eye of a large assembly. Variation of gesture, and flexion of voice, are to be obtained only by experience.

There is nothing for which such numbers think themselves qualified as for theatrical exhibition. Every human being has an action graceful to his own eye, a voice musical to his own ear, and a sensibility which nature forbids him to know that any other bosom can excel. An art in which such numbers fancy themselves excellent, and which the public liberally rewards, will excite many competitors, and in many attempts there must be many miscarriages.

The care of the critic should be to distinguish error from inability, faults of inexperience from defects of nature. Action irregular and turbulent may

be reclaimed; vociferation vehement and confused may be restrained and modulated; the stalk of the tyrant may become the gait of the man; the yell of inarticulate distress may be reduced to human lamentation. All these faults should be for a time overlooked, and afterwards censured with gentleness and candour. But if in an actor there appears an utter vacancy of meaning, a frigid equality, a stupid languor, a torpid apathy, the greatest kindness that can be shown him, is a speedy sentence of expulsion.

I am, SIR, &c.

THE plea which my correspondent has offered for young actors, I am very far from wishing to invalidate. I always considered those combinations which are sometimes formed in the playhouse, as acts of fraud or of cruelty; he that applauds him who does not deserve praise, is endeavouring to deceive the public; he that hisses in malice or sport, is an oppressor and a robber.

But surely this laudable forbearance might be justly extended to young poets. The art of the writer, like that of the player, is attained by slow degrees. The power of distinguishing and discriminating comic characters, or of filling tragedy with poetical images, must be the gift of nature, which no instruction nor labour can supply; but the art of dramatic disposition, the contexture of the scenes, the opposition of characters, the involution of the plot, the expedients of suspension, and the stratagems of surprise, are to be learned by practice; and it is cruel to discourage a poet for ever, because he has not from genius what only experience can bestow.

Life is a stage. Let me likewise solicit candour for the young actor on the stage of life. They that

enter into the world are too often treated with unreasonable rigour by those that were once as ignorant and heady as themselves; and distinction is not always made between the faults which require speedy and violent eradication, and those that will gradually drop away in the progression of life. Vicious solicitations of appetite, if not checked, will grow more importunate; and mean arts of profit or ambition will gather strength in the mind, if they are not early suppressed. But mistaken notions of superiority, desires of useless show, pride of little accomplishments, and all the train of vanity, will be brushed away by the wing of Time.

Reproof should not exhaust its power upon petty failings; let it watch diligently against the incursion of vice, and leave foppery and futility to die of themselves.

N° 26. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1758.

MR. IDLER;

I NEVER thought that I should write any thing to be printed; but having lately seen your first essay, which was sent down into the kitchen, with a great bundle of gazettes and useless papers, I find that you are willing to admit any correspondent, and therefore hope you will not reject me. If you publish my letter, it may encourage others, in the same condition with myself, to tell their stories, which may be perhaps as useful as those of great ladies.

I am a poor girl. I was bred in the country at a charity-school, maintained by the contributions of wealthy neighbours. The ladies, or patronesses, visited us from time to time, examined how we were taught, and saw that our clothes were clean. We lived happily enough, and were instructed to be thankful to those at whose cost we were educated. I was always the favourite of my mistress; she used to call me to read, and show my copy-book to all strangers, who never dismissed me without commendation, and very seldom without a shilling.

At last the chief of our subscribers, having passed a winter in *London*, came down full of an opinion new and strange to the whole country. She held it little less than criminal to teach poor girls to read and write. They who are born to poverty, said she, are born to ignorance, and will work the harder, the less they know. She told her friends, that *London* was in confusion by the insolence of servants; that scarcely a wench was to be got for *all work*, since education had made such numbers of fine ladies, that nobody would now accept a lower title than that of a waiting-maid or something that might qualify her to wear laced shoes and long ruffles, and to sit at work in the parlour window. But she was resolved, for her part, to spoil no more girls; those, who were to live by their hands, should neither read nor write out of her pocket; the world was bad enough already, and she would have no part in making it worse.

She was for a short time warmly opposed; but she persevered in her notions, and withdrew her subscription. Few listen without a desire of conviction to those who advise them to spare their money. Her example and her arguments gained ground daily; and in less than a year the whole parish was con-

vinced, that the nation would be ruined, if the children of the poor were taught to read and write.

Our school was now dissolved: my mistress kissed me when we parted, and told me, that, being old and helpless, she could not assist me, advised me to seek a service, and charged me not to forget what I had learned.

My reputation for scholarship, which had hitherto recommended me to favour, was, by the adherents to the new opinion, considered as a crime; and, when I offered myself to any mistress, I had no other answer than *Sure, child, you would not work! hard work is not fit for a pen-woman; a scrubbing-brush would spoil your hand, child!*

I could not live at home; and while I was considering to what I should betake me, one of the girls, who had gone from our school to *London* came down in a silk gown, and told her acquaintance how well she lived, what fine things she saw, and what great wages she received. I resolved to try my fortune, and took my passage in the next week's waggon to *London*. I had no snares laid for me at my arrival, but came safe to a sister of my mistress, who undertook to get me a place. She knew only the families of mean tradesmen; and I, having no high opinion of my own qualifications, was willing to accept the first offer.

My first mistress was wife of a working watchmaker, who earned more than was sufficient to keep his family in decency and plenty; but it was their constant practice to hire a chaise on *Sunday*, and spend half the wages of the week on *Richmond Hill;* of *Monday* he commonly lay half in bed, and spent the other half in merriment; *Tuesday* and *Wednesday* consumed the rest of his money; and three days every week were passed in extremity of

want by us who were left at home, while my master lived on trust at an ale-house. You may be sure, that of the sufferers, the maid suffered most; and I left them, after three months, rather than be starved.

I was then maid to a hatter's wife. There was no want to be dreaded, for they lived in perpetual luxury. My mistress was a diligent woman, and rose early in the morning to set the journeymen to work; my master was a man much beloved by his neighbours, and sat at one club or other every night. I was obliged to wait on my master at night, and on my mistress in the morning. He seldom came home before two, and she rose at five. I could no more live without sleep than without food, and therefore entreated them to look out for another servant.

My next removal was to a linen-draper's who had six children. My mistress, when I first entered the house, informed me, that I must never contradict the children, nor suffer them to cry. had no desire to offend, and readily promised to do my best. But when I gave them their breakfast, I could not help all first; when I was playing with one in my lap, I was forced to keep the rest in expectation. That which was not gratified always resented the injury with a loud outcry, which put my mistress in a fury at me, and procured sugar-plums to the child. I could not keep six children quiet, who were bribed to be clamorous; and was therefore dismissed, as a girl honest, but not good-natured.

I then lived with a couple that kept a petty shop of remnants and cheap linen. I was qualified to make a bill, or keep a book: and being therefore often called, at a busy time, to serve the customers,

expected that I should now be happy, in proportion as I was useful. But my mistress appropriated every day part of the profit to some private use, and, as she grew bolder in her theft, at last deducted such sums, that my master began to wonder how he sold so much, and gained so little. She pretended to assist his inquiries, and began, very gravely, to hope that *Betty was honest, and yet those sharp girls were apt to be light-fingered.* You will believe that I did not stay there much longer.

The rest of my story I will tell you in another letter; and only beg to be informed, in some paper, for which of my places, except perhaps the last, I was disqualified by my skill in reading and writing.

I am, SIR,

Your very humble servant,

BETTY BROOM.

N° 27. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1758.

IT has been the endeavour of all those whom the world has reverenced for superior wisdom, to persuade man to be acquainted with himself, to learn his own powers and his own weakness, to observe by what evils he is most dangerously beset, and by what temptations most easily overcome.

This counsel has been often given with serious dignity, and often received with appearance of conviction; but, as very few can search deep into their own minds without meeting what they wish

to hide from themselves, scarcely any man persists in cultivating such disagreeable acquaintance, but draws the veil again between his eyes and his heart, leaves his passions and appetites as he found them, and advises others to look into themselves.

This is the common result of inquiry even among those that endeavour to grow wiser or better: but this endeavour is far enough from frequency; the greater part of the multitudes that swarm upon the earth have never been disturbed by such uneasy curiosity, but deliver themselves up to business or to pleasure, plunge into the current of life, whether placid or turbulent, and pass on from one point of prospect to another, attentive rather to any thing than the state of their minds; satisfied, at an easy rate, with an opinion, that they are no worse than others, that every man must mind his own interest, or that their pleasures hurt only themselves, and are therefore no proper subjects of censure.

Some, however, there are, whom the intrusion of scruples, the recollection of better notions, or the latent reprehension of good examples, will not suffer to live entirely contented with their own conduct; these are forced to pacify the mutiny of reason with fair promises, and quiet their thoughts with designs of calling all their actions to review, and planning new scheme for the time to come.

There is nothing which we estimate so fallaciously as the force of our own resolutions, nor any fallacy which we so unwillingly and tardily detect. He that has resolved a thousand times, and a thousand times deserted his own purpose, yet suffers no abatement of his confidence, but still believes himself his own master; and able, by innate vigour of soul, to press forward to his end, through all the

obstructions that inconveniences or delights can put in his way.

That this mistake should prevail for a time is very natural. When conviction is present, and temptation out of sight, we do not easily conceive how any reasonable being can deviate from his true interest. What ought to be done while it yet hangs only in speculation, is so plain and certain, that there is no place for doubt; the whole soul yields itself to the predominance of truth, and readily determines to do what, when the time of action comes, will be at last omitted.

I believe most men may review all the lives that have passed within their observation, without remembering one efficacious resolution, or being able to tell a single instance of a course of practice suddenly changed in consequence of a change of opinion, or an establishment of determination. Many, indeed, alter their conduct, and are not at fifty what they were at thirty; but they commonly varied imperceptibly from themselves, followed the train of external causes, and rather suffered reformation than made it.

It is not uncommon to charge the difference between promise and performance, between profession and reality, upon deep design and studied deceit; but the truth is, that there is very little hypocrisy in the world: we do not so often endeavour or wish to impose on others as on ourselves; we resolve to do right, we hope to keep our resolutions, we declare them to confirm our own hope, and fix our own inconstancy by calling witnesses of our actions: but at last habit prevails, and those whom we invited to our triumph, laugh at our defeat.

Custom is commonly too strong for the most resolute resolver, though furnished for the assault with all the weapons of philosophy. "He that endea-

" vours to free himself from an ill habit," says *Bacon*, " must not change too much at a time, lest he " should be discouraged by difficulty; nor too little, " for then he will make but slow advances." This is a precept which may be applauded in a book, but will fail in the trial, in which every change will be found too great or too little. Those who have been able to conquer habit, are like those that are fabled to have returned from the realms of *Pluto :*

Pauci, quos æquus amavit
Jupiter, atque ardens evexit ad æthera virtus.

They are sufficient to give hope, but not security to animate the contest, but not to promise victory.

Those who are in the power of evil habits, must conquer them as they can; and conquered they must be, or neither wisdom nor happiness can be attained; but those who are not yet subject to their influence may, by timely caution, preserve their freedom; they may effectually resolve to escape the tyrant, whom they will very vainly resolve to conquer.

N° 28. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1758

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

It is very easy for a man who sits idle at home, and has nobody to please but himself, to ridicule or to censure the common practices of mankind; and

those who have no present temptation to break the rules of propriety, may applaud his judgment, and join in his merriment; but let the author or his readers mingle with common life, they will find themselves irresistibly borne away by the stream of custom, and must submit, after they have laughed at others, to give others the same opportunity of laughing at them.

There is no paper published by the *Idler* which I have read with more approbation than that which censures the practice of recording vulgar marriages in the newspapers. I carried it about in my pocket, and read it to all those whom I suspected of having published their nuptials, or of being inclined to publish them, and sent transcripts of it to all the couples that transgressed your precepts for the next fortnight. I hoped that they were all vexed, and pleased myself with imagining their misery.

But short is the triumph of malignity. I was married last week to Miss *Mohair*, the daughter of a salesman; and, at my first appearance after the wedding night, was asked by my wife's mother whether I had sent our marriage to the *Advertiser*; I endeavoured to show how unfit it was to demand the attention of the public to our domestic affairs; but she told me, with great vehemence, "That she "would not have it thought to be a stolen match; "that the blood of the *Mohairs* should never be dis-"graced; that her husband had served all the "parish offices but one; that she had lived five-and-"thirty years at the same house, had paid every "body twenty shillings in the pound, and would "have me know, though she was not as fine and "as flaunting as Mrs. *Gingham*, the deputy's wife, "she was not ashamed to tell her name, and would "show her face with the best of them, and since I "had married her daughter ——" At this instant

entered my father-in-law, a grave man, from whom I expected succour: but upon hearing the case, he told me, "That it would be very imprudent to miss "such an opportunity of advertising my shop; and "that when notice was given of my marriage, "many of my wife's friends would think themselves obliged to be my customers." I was subdued by clamour on one side, and gravity on the other, and shall be obliged to tell the town that *three days ago* Timothy Mushroom, *an eminent oilman in* Sea-Coal-Lane, *was married to Miss* Polly Mohair, *of* Lothbury, *a beautiful young lady, with a large fortune.*

I am, SIR, &c.

SIR;

I AM the unfortunate wife of the grocer whose letter you published about ten weeks ago, in which he complains, like a sorry fellow, that I loiter in the shop with my needle-work in my hand, and that I oblige him to take me out on *Sundays*, and keep a girl to look after the child. Sweet Mr. *Idler*, if you did but know all, you would give no encouragement to such an unreasonable grumbler. I brought him three hundred pounds, which set him up in a shop, and bought in a stock, on which, with good management, we might live comfortably; but now I have given him a shop, I am forced to watch him and the shop too. I will tell you, Mr. *Idler*, how it is. There is an alehouse over the way, with a nine-pin alley, to which he is sure to run when I

turn my back, and there he loses his money, for he plays at nine-pins as he does every thing else. While he is at this favourite sport, he sets a dirty boy to watch his door, and call him to his customers; but he is long in coming, and so rude when he comes, that our custom falls off every day.

Those who cannot govern themselves, must be governed, I am resolved to keep him for the future behind his counter, and let him bounce at his customers if he dares. I cannot be above stairs and below at the same time, and have therefore taken a girl to look after the child, and dress the dinner; and, after all, pray who is to blame?

On a *Sunday*, it is true, I make him walk abroad, and sometimes carry the child;—I wonder who should carry it! But I never take him out till after church-time, nor would do it then, but that, if he is left alone, he will be upon the bed. On a *Sunday*, if he stays at home, he has six meals; and, when he can eat no longer, has twenty stratagems to escape from me to the ale-house; but I commonly keep the door locked, till *Monday* produces something for him to do.

This is the true state of the case, and these are the provocations for which he has written his letter to you. I hope you will write a paper to show that, if a wife must spend her whole time in watching her husband, she cannot conveniently tend her child, or sit at her needle.

I am, SIR, &c.

SIR;

THERE is in this town a species of oppression which the law has not hitherto prevented or redressed.

I am a chairman. You know, Sir, we come when we are called, and are expected to carry all who require our assistance. It is common for men of the most unwieldy corpulence to crowd themselves into a chair, and demand to be carried for a shilling as far as an airy young lady whom we scarcely feel upon our poles. Surely we ought to be paid like all other mortals, in proportion to our labour. Engines should be fixed in proper places to weigh chairs as they weigh waggons; and those, whom ease and plenty have made unable to carry themselves, should give part of their superfluities to those who carry them.

I am, SIR, &c.

N° 29. SATURDAY, NOV. 4, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I HAVE often observed, that friends are lost by discontinuance of intercourse, without any offence on either part, and have long known, that it is more

dangerous to be forgotten than to be blamed; I therefore make haste to send you the rest of my story, lest, by the delay of another fortnight, the name of *Betty Broom* might be no longer remembered by you or your readers.

Having left the last place in haste, to avoid the charge or the suspicion of theft, I had not secured another service, and was forced to take a lodging in a back street, I had now got good clothes. The woman who lived in the garret opposite to mine was very officious, and offered to take care of my room and clean it, while I went round to my acquaintance to inquire for a mistress. I knew not why she was so kind, nor how I could recompense her; but in a few days I missed some of my linen, went to another lodging, and resolved not to have another friend in the next garret.

In six weeks I became under-maid at the house of a mercer in *Cornhill*, whose son was his apprentice. The young gentleman used to sit late at the tavern, without the knowledge of his father; and I was ordered by my mistress to let him in silently to his bed under the counter, and to be very careful to take away his candle. The hours which I was obliged to watch, whilst the rest of the family was in bed, I considered as supernumerary, and, having no business assigned for them, thought myself at liberty to spend them my own way: I kept myself awake with a book, and for some time liked my state the better for this opportunity of reading. At last, the upper-maid found my book, and showed it to my mistress, who told me, that wenches like me might spend their time better; that she never knew any of the readers that had good designs in their heads; that she could always find something else to do with her time, than to puzzle over books; and did not like that such a fine lady should sit up for her young master.

This was the first time that I found it thought criminal or dangerous to know how to read. I was dismissed decently, lest I should tell tales, and had a small gratuity above my wages.

I then lived with a gentlewoman of a small fortune. This was the only happy part of my life. My mistress, for whom public diversions were too expensive, spent her time with books, and was pleased to find a maid who could partake her amusements. I rose early in the morning, that I might have time in the afternoon to read or listen, and was suffered to tell my opinion, or express my delight. Thus fifteen months stole away, in which I did not repine that I was born to servitude. But a burning fever seized my mistress, of whom I shall say no more, than that her servant wept upon her grave.

I had lived in a kind of luxury which made me very unfit for another place: and was rather too delicate for the conversation of a kitchen; so that when I was hired in the family of an East India director, my behaviour was so different, as they said, from that of a common servant, that they concluded me a gentlewoman in disguise, and turned me out in three weeks, on suspicion of some design which they could not comprehend.

I then fled for refuge to the other end of the town, where I hoped to find no obstruction from my new accomplishments, and was hired under the housekeeper in a splendid family. Here I was too wise for the maids, and too nice for the footman; yet I might have lived on without much uneasiness, had not my mistress, the housekeeper, who used to employ me in buying necessaries for the family, found a bill which I had made of one day's expence. I suppose it did not quite agree with her own book, for she fiercely declared her resolution, that there should be no pen and ink in that kitchen but her own.

She had the justice, or the prudence, not to injure my reputation; and I was easily admitted into another house in the neighbourhood, where my business was, to sweep the rooms and make the beds. Here I was for some time the favourite of Mrs. *Simper*, my lady's woman, who could not bear the vulgar girls, and was happy in the attendance of a young woman of some education. Mrs. *Simper* loved a novel, though she could not read hard words, and therefore, when her lady was abroad, we always laid hold on her books. At last, my abilities became so much celebrated, that the house-steward used to employ me in keeping his accounts. Mrs. *Simper* then found out, that my sauciness was grown to such a height that nobody could endure it, and told my lady, that there had never been a room well swept since *Betty Broom* came into the house.

I was then hired by a consumptive lady, who wanted a maid that could read and write. I attended her four years, and though she was never pleased, yet when I declared my resolution to leave her, she burst into tears, and told me that I must bear the peevishness of a sick bed, and I should find myself remembered in her will. I complied, and a codicil was added in my favour; but in less than a week, when I set her gruel before her, I laid the spoon on the left side, and she threw her will into the fire. In two days she made another, which she burnt in the same manner, because she could not eat her chicken. A third was made, and destroyed because she heard a mouse within the wainscot, and was sure that I should suffer her to be carried away alive. After this I was for some time out of favour, but as her illness grew upon her, resentment and sullenness gave way to kinder sentiments. She died, and left me five hundred pounds; with this fortune I am

going to settle in my native parish, where I resolve to spend some hours every day in teaching poor girls to read and write.

I am, SIR,

Your humble servant,

BETTY BROOM.

N° 30. SATURDAY, NOV. 11, 1758.

THE desires of man increase with his acquisitions; every step which he advances brings something within his view, which he did not see before, and which, as soon as he sees it, he begins to want. Where necessity ends, curiosity begins; and no sooner are we supplied with every thing that nature can demand, than we sit down to contrive artificial appetites.

By this restlessness of mind, every populous and wealthy city is filled with innumerable employments, for which the greater part of mankind is without a name; with artificers, whose labour is exerted in producing such petty conveniences, that many shops are furnished with instruments of which the use can hardly be found without inquiry, but which he that once knows them quickly learns to number among necessary things.

Such is the diligence with which, in countries completely civilized, one part of mankind labours for another, that wants are supplied faster than they can be formed, and the idle and luxurious find life

stagnate for want of some desire to keep it in motion. This species of distress furnishes a new set of occupations; and multitudes are busied from day to day, in finding the rich and the fortunate something to do.

It is very common to reproach those artists as useless, who produce only such superfluities as neither accommodate the body, nor improve the mind; and of which no other effect can be imagined, than that they are the occasions of spending money, and consuming time.

But this censure will be mitigated when it is seriously considered that money and time are the heaviest burthens of life, and that the unhappiest of all mortals are those who have more of either than they know how to use. To set himself free from these incumbrances, one hurries to *Newmarket;* another travels over *Europe;* one pulls down his house and calls architects about him; another buys a seat in the country, and follows his hounds over hedges and through rivers; one makes collections of shells; and another searches the world for tulips and carnations.

He is surely a public benefactor who finds employment for those to whom it is thus difficult to find it for themselves. It is true, that this is seldom done merely from generosity or compassion; almost every man seeks his own advantage in helping others, and therefore it is too common for mercenary officiousness to consider rather what is grateful, than what is right.

We all know that it is more profitable to be loved than esteemed; and ministers of pleasure will always be found, who study to make themselves necessary, and to supplant those who are practising the same arts.

One of the amusements of idleness is reading without the fatigue of close attention, and the world,

therefore swarms with writers whose wish is not to be studied, but to be read.

No species of literary men has lately been so much multiplied as the writers of news. Not many years ago the nation was content with one gazette; but now we have not only in the metropolis papers for every morning and every evening, but almost every large town has its weekly historian, who regularly circulates his periodical intelligence, and fills the villages of his district with conjectures on the events of war, and with debates on the true interests of *Europe*.

To write news in its perfection requires such a combination of qualities, that a man completely fitted for the task is not always to be found. In Sir *Henry Wotton*'s jocular definition, *An ambassador* is said to be *a man of virtue sent abroad to tell lies for the advantage of his country;* a news-writer is *a man without virtue, who writes lies at home for his own profit.* To these compositions is required neither genius nor knowledge, neither industry nor sprightliness; but contempt of shame, and indifference to truth, are absolutely necessary. He who by a long familiarity with infamy has obtained these qualities, may confidently tell to-day what he intends to contradict to-morrow; he may affirm fearlessly what he knows that he shall be obliged to recant, and may write letters from *Amsterdam* or *Dresden* to himself.

In a time of war the nation is always of one mind, eager to hear something good of themselves, and ill of the enemy. At this time the task of news-writers is easy: they have nothing to do but to tell that the battle is expected, and afterwards that a battle has been fought, in which we and our friends, whether conquering or conquered, did all, and our enemies did nothing.

Scarcely any thing awakens attention like a tale of cruelty. The writer of news never fails in the in-

termission of action to tell how the enemies murdered children and ravished virgins; and if the scene of action be somewhat distant, scalps half the inhabitants of a province.

Among the calamities of war, may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth, by the falsehoods which interest dictates, and credulity encourages. A peace will equally leave the warrior and relator of wars destitute of employment; and I know not whether more is to be dreaded from streets filled with soldiers accustomed to plunder, or from garrets filled with scribblers accustomed to lie.

N° 31. SATURDAY, NOV. 18, 1758.

MANY moralists have remarked, that pride has of all human vices the widest dominion, appears in the greatest multiplicity of forms, and lies hid under the greatest variety of disguises; of disguises which, like the moon's *veil of brightness*, are both its *lustre and its shade*, and betray it to others, though they hide it from ourselves.

It is not my intention to degrade pride from this pre-eminence of mischief; yet I know not whether idleness may not maintain a very doubtful and obstinate competition.

There are some that profess idleness in its full dignity, who call themselves the *Idle*, as *Busiris* in the play *calls himself the Proud;* who boast that they do nothing, and thank their stars that they have nothing to do; who sleep every night till they can

sleep no longer, and rise only that exercise may enable them to sleep again; who prolong the reign of darkness by double curtains; and never see the sun but to *tell him how they hate his beams;* whose whole labour is to vary the posture of indulgence, and whose day differs from their night but as a couch or chair differs from a bed.

These are the true and open votaries of idleness for whom she weaves the garlands of poppies, and into whose cup she pours the waters of oblivion; who exist in a state of unruffled stupidity, forgetting and forgotten; who have long ceased to live, and at whose death the survivors can only say that they have ceased to breathe.

But idleness predominates in many lives where it is not suspected; for, being a vice which terminates in itself it may be enjoyed without injury to others; and it is therefore not watched like fraud, which endangers property; or like pride, which naturally seeks its gratifications in another's inferiority. Idleness is a silent and peaceful quality, that neither raises envy by ostentation, nor hatred by opposition; and therefore nobody is busy to censure or detect it.

As pride sometimes is hid under humility, idleness is often covered by turbulence and hurry. He that neglects his known duty and real employment, naturally endeavours to crowd his mind with something that may bar out the remembrance of his own folly, and does any thing but what he ought to do with eager diligence, that he may keep himself in his own favour.

Some are always in a state of preparation, occupied in previous measures, forming plans, accumulating materials, and providing for the main affair. These are certainly under the secret power of idleness. Nothing is to be expected from the workman

whose tools are for ever to be sought. I was once told by a great master that no man ever excelled in painting, who was eminently curious about pencils and colours.

There are others to whom idleness dictates another expedient, by which life may be passed unprofitably away without the tediousness of many vacant hours. The art is, to fill the day with petty business, to have always something in hand which may raise curiosity, but not solicitude, and keep the mind in a state of action, but not of labour.

This art has for many years been practised by my old friend *Sober* with wonderful success. *Sober* is a man of strong desires and quick imagination, so exactly balanced by the love of ease, that they can seldom stimulate him to any difficult undertaking; they have however, so much power, that they will not suffer him to lie quite at rest; and though they do not make him sufficiently useful to others, they make him at least weary of himself.

Mr. *Sober*'s chief pleasure is conversation: there is no end of his talk or his attention; to speak or to hear is equally pleasing; for he still fancies that he is teaching or learning something, and is free for the time from his own reproaches.

But there is one time at night when he must go home, that his friends may sleep; and another time in the morning, when all the world agrees to shut out interruption. These are the moments of which poor *Sober* trembles at the thought. But the misery of these irksome intervals he has many means of alleviating. He has persuaded himself that the manual arts are undeservedly overlooked; he has observed in many trades the effects of close thought, and just ratiocination. From speculation he proceeded to practice, and supplied himself with the tools of a carpenter, with which he mended his coal-

box very successfully, and which he still continues to employ, as he finds occasion.

He has attempted at other times the crafts of shoe-maker, tinman, plumber, and potter; in all these arts, he has failed, and resolves to qualify himself for them by better information. But his daily amusement is chemistry. He has a small furnace, which he employs in distillation, and which has long been the solace of his life. He draws oils and waters, and essences and spirits, which he knows to be of no use; sits and counts the drops as they come from his retort, and forgets that, whilst a drop is falling, a moment flies away.

Poor *Sober!* I have often teized him with reproof, and he has often promised reformation; for no man is so much open to conviction as the *Idler*, but there is none on which it operates so little. What will be the effect of this paper I know not; perhaps he will read it and laugh, and light the fire in his furnace; but my hope is, that he will quit his trifles, and betake himself to rational and useful diligence.

N° 32. SATURDAY, NOV. 25, 1758.

Among the innumerable mortifications that waylay human arrogance on every side, may well be reckoned our ignorance of the most common objects and effects, a defect of which we become more sensible, by every attempt to supply it. Vulgar and inactive minds confound familiarity with knowledge, and conceive themselves informed of the whole nature of things when they are shown their

form or told their use; but the speculatist, who is not content with superficial views, harasses himself with fruitless curiosity, and still as he acquires more, perceives only that he knows less.

Sleep is a state in which a great part of every life is passed. No animal has yet been discovered, whose existence is not varied with intervals of insensibility; and some late philosophers have extended the empire of sleep over the vegetable world.

Yet of this change, so frequent, so great, so general, and so necessary, no searcher has yet found either the efficient or final cause; or can tell by what power the mind and body are thus chained down in irresistible stupefaction; or what benefits the animal receives from this alternate suspension of its active powers.

Whatever may be the multiplicity or contrariety of opinions upon this subject, Nature has taken sufficient care that theory shall have little influence on practice. The most diligent inquirer is not able long to keep his eyes open; the most eager disputant will begin about midnight to desert his argument; and once in four-and-twenty hours, the gay and the gloomy, the witty and the dull, the clamorous and the silent, the busy and the idle, are all overpowered by the gentle tyrant, and all lie down in the equality of sleep.

Philosophy has often attempted to repress insolence, by asserting that all conditions are levelled by death; a position which, however it may deject the happy, will seldom afford much comfort to the wretched. It is far more pleasing to consider, that sleep is equally a leveller with death; that the time is never at a great distance, when the balm of rest shall be diffused alike upon every head, when the diversities of life shall stop their operation, and the high and low shall lay down together.

It is somewhere recorded of *Alexander*, that in the pride of conquests, and intoxication of flattery, he declared that he only perceived himself to be a man by the necessity of sleep. Whether he considered sleep as necessary to his mind or body, it was indeed a sufficient evidence of human infirmity; the body which required such frequency of renovation, gave but faint promises of immortality: and the mind which, from time to time, sunk gladly into insensibility, had made no very near approaches to the felicity of the supreme and self-sufficient nature.

I know not what can tend more to repress all the passions that disturb the peace of the world, than the consideration that there is no height of happiness or honour from which man does not eagerly descend to a state of unconscious repose; that the best condition of life is such, that we contentedly quit its good to be disentangled from its evils; that in a few hours splendor fades before the eye, and praise itself deadens in the ear; the senses withdraw from their objects, and reason favours the retreat.

What then are the hopes and prospects of covetousness, ambition, and rapacity? Let him that desires most have all his desires gratified, he never shall attain a state which he can for a day and a night contemplate with satisfaction, or from which, if he had the power of perpetual vigilance, he would not long for periodical separations.

All envy would be extinguished, if it were universally known that there are none to be envied, and surely none can be much envied who are not pleased with themselves. There is reason to suspect, that the distinctions of mankind have more show than value, when it is found that all agree to be weary alike of pleasures and of cares; that the powerful and the weak, the celebrated and obscure,

join in one common wish, and implore from Nature's hand the nectar of oblivion.

Such is our desire of abstraction from ourselves, that very few are satisfied with the quantity of stupefaction which the needs of the body force upon the mind. *Alexander* himself added intemperance to sleep, and solaced with the fumes of wine the sovereignty of the world; and almost every man has some art by which he steals his thoughts away from his present state.

It is not much of life that is spent in close attention to any important duty. Many hours of every day are suffered to fly away without any traces left upon the intellects. We suffer phantoms to rise up before us, and amuse ourselves with the dance of airy images, which, after a time, we dismiss for ever, and know not how we have been busied.

Many have no happier moments than those that they pass in solitude, abandoned to their own imagination, which sometimes puts sceptres in their hands or mitres on their heads, shifts the scene of pleasure with endless variety, bids all the forms of beauty sparkle before them, and gluts them with every change of visionary luxury.

It is easy in these semi-slumbers to collect all the possibilities of happiness, to alter the course of the sun, to bring back the past, and anticipate the future, to unite all the beauties of all seasons, and all the blessings of all climates, to receive and bestow felicity, and forget that misery is the lot of man. All this is a voluntary dream, a temporary recession from the realities of life to airy fictions; and habitual subjection of reason to fancy.

Others are afraid to be alone, and amuse themselves by a perpetual succession of companions; but the difference is not great: in solitude we have our dreams to ourselves, and in company we agree to

dream in concert. The end sought in both is, forgetfulness of ourselves.

N° 33. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1758.

[I hope the author of the following letter will excuse the omission of some parts, and allow me to remark, that the Journal of the Citizen in the *Spectator* has almost precluded the attempt of any future writer.]

——— *Non ita Romuli*
Præscriptum, & intonsi Catonis
Auspiciis, veterumque normâ.

HOR.

SIR;

YOU have often solicited correspondence. I have sent you the *Journal* of a *Senior Fellow*, or *Genuine Idler*, just transmitted from *Cambridge* by a facetious correspondent, and warranted to have been transcribed from the common-place book of the journalist.

Monday, Nine o'Clock. Turned off my bed-maker for waking me at night. Weather rainy. Consulted my weather-glass. No hopes of a ride before dinner.

Ditto, Ten. After breakfast transcribed half a sermon from Dr. *Hickman*. *N. B.* Never to transcribe any more from *Calamy;* Mrs. *Pilcocks*, at my

curacy, having one volume of that author lying in her parlour-window.

Ditto, Eleven. Went down into my cellar. *Mem.* My *Mountain* will be fit to drink in a month's time. *N. B.* To remove the five-year-old port into the new bin on the left hand.

Ditto, Twelve. Mended a pen. Looked at my weather-glass again. Quicksilver very low. Shaved. Barber's hand shakes.

Ditto, One. Dined alone in my room on a soal. *N. B.* The shrimp-sauce not so good as Mr. *H.* of *Peterhouse* and I used to eat in *London* last winter, at the *Mitre* in *Fleet-street.* Sat down to a pint of *Madeira.* Mr. *H.* surprised me over it. We finished two bottles of port together, and were very cheerful. *Mem.* To dine with Mr. *H.* at *Peterhouse* next *Wednesday.* One of the dishes a leg of pork and peas, by my desire.

Ditto, Six. Newspaper in the common room.

Ditto, Seven. Returned to my room. Made a tiff of warm punch, and to bed before nine; did not fall asleep till ten, a young fellow-commoner being very noisy over my head.

Tuesday, Nine. Rose squeamish. A fine morning. Weather-glass very high.

Ditto, Ten. Ordered my horse, and rode to the five-mile stone on the *Newmarket* road. Appetite gets better. A pack of hounds in full cry crossed the road, and startled my horse.

Ditto, Twelve. Dressed. Found a letter on my table to be in *London* the 19th inst. Bespoke a new wig.

Ditto, One. At dinner in the hall. Too much water in the soup. Dr. *Dry* always orders the beef to be salted too much for me.

Ditto, Two. In the common-room. Dr. *Dry* gave us an instance of a gentleman who kept the gout out

of his stomach by drinking old *Madeira*. Conversation chiefly on the expeditions. Company broke up at four. Dr. *Dry* and myself played at back-gammon for a brace of snipes. Won.

Ditto, Five. At the coffee-house. Met Mr. *H.* there. Could not get a sight of the *Monitor*.

Ditto, Seven. Returned home, and stirred my fire. Went to the common-room, and supped on the snipes with Dr. *Dry*.

Ditto, Eight. Began the evening in the common-room. Dr. *Dry* told several stories. Were very merry. Our new fellow that studies physic, very talkative toward twelve. Pretends he will bring the youngest Miss ———— to drink tea with me soon. Impertinent blockhead!

Wednesday, Nine. Alarmed with a pain in my ancle. Q. The gout? Fear I can't dine at *Peterhouse;* but I hope a ride will set all to rights. Weather-glass below FAIR.

Ditto, Ten. Mounted my horse, though the weather suspicious. Pain in my ancle entirely gone. Catched in a shower coming back. Convinced that my weather-glass is the best in *Cambridge*.

Ditto, Twelve. Dressed. Sauntered up to the *Fishmonger's*-hill. Met Mr. *H.* and went with him to *Peterhouse*. Cook made us wait thirty-six minutes beyond the time. The company, some of my *Emanuel* friends. For dinner, a pair of soals, a leg of pork and peas among other things. *Mem.* Pease-pudding not boiled enough. Cook reprimanded and sconced in my presence.

Ditto, after dinner. Pain in my ancle returns. Dull all the afternoon. Rallied for being no company. Mr. *H.*'s account of the accommodations on the road in his *Bath* journey.

Ditto, Six. Got into spirits. Never was more chatty. We sat late at whist. Mr. *H.* and self

agreed at parting to take a gentle ride, and dine at the old house on the *London* road to-morrow.

Thursday, Nine. My sempstress. She has lost the measure of my wrist. Forced to be measured again. The baggage has got a trick of smiling.

Ditto, Ten to Eleven. Made some rappee-snuff. Read the magazines. Received a present of pickles from Miss *Pilcocks*. *Mem.* To send in return some collared eel, which I know both the old lady and miss are fond of.

Ditto, Eleven. Glass very high. Mounted at the gate with Mr. *H.* Horse skittish and wants exercise. Arrive at the old house. All the provisions bespoke by some rakish fellow-commoner in the next room, who had been on a scheme to *Newmarket*. Could get nothing but mutton-chops off the worst end. Port very new. Agree to try some other house to-morrow.

HERE the Journal breaks off: for the next morning, as my friend informs me, our genial academic was waked with a severe fit of the gout; and, at present, enjoys all the dignity of that disease. But I believe we have lost nothing by this interruption: since a continuation of the remainder of the Journal, through the remainder of the week, would most probably have exhibited nothing more than a repeated relation of the same circumstances of *idling* and luxury.

I hope it will not be concluded, from this specimen of academic life, that I have attempted to decry our universities. If literature is not the essential requisite of the modern academic, I am yet persuaded that *Cambridge* and *Oxford*, however degenerated, surpass the fashionable *academies* of our metropolis, and the *gymnasia* of foreign countries. The number of learned persons in these celebrated seats is still

considerable, and more conveniences and opportunities for study still subsist in them, than in any other place. There is at least one very powerful incentive to learning; I mean the GENIUS *of the place.* It is a sort of inspiring deity, which every youth of quick sensibility and ingenious disposition creates to himself, by reflecting, that he is placed under those venerable walls, where a HOOKER and a HAMMOND, a BACON and a NEWTON, once pursued the same course of science, and from whence they soared to the most elevated heights of literary fame. This is that incitement which *Tully*, according to his own testimony, experienced at *Athens*, when he contemplated the porticos where *Socrates* sat, and the laurel-groves where *Plato* disputed. But there are other circumstances, and of the highest importance, which render our colleges superior to all other places of education. Their institutions, although somewhat fallen from their primæval simplicity, are such as influence in a particular manner, the moral conduct of their youth; and in this general depravity of manners and laxity of principles, pure religion is no where more strongly inculcated. The *academies*, as they are presumptuously styled, are too low to be mentioned; and foreign seminaries are likely to prejudice the unwary mind with Calvinism. But *English* universities render their students virtuous, at least by excluding all opportunities of vice; and, by teaching them the principles of the *Church of England*, confirm them in those of true Christianity.

N° 34. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1758.

To illustrate one thing by its resemblance to another, has been always the most popular and efficacious art of instruction. There is indeed no other method of teaching that of which any one is ignorant, but by means of something already known; and a mind so enlarged by contemplation and inquiry, that it has always many objects within its view, will seldom be long without some near and familiar image through which an easy transition may be made to truths more distant and obscure.

Of the parallels which have been drawn by wit and curiosity, some are literal and real, as between poetry and painting, two arts which pursue the same end, by the operation of the same mental faculties, and which differ only as the one represents things by marks permanent and natural, the other by signs accidental and arbitrary. The one therefore is more easily and generally understood, since similitude of form is immediately perceived; the other is capable of conveying more ideas; for men have thought and spoken of many things which they do not see.

Other parallels are fortuitous and fanciful, yet these have sometimes been extended to many particulars of resemblance by a lucky concurrence of diligence and chance. The animal *body* is composed of many members, united under the direction of one mind; any number of individuals, connected for some common purpose, is therefore called a body. From this participation of the same appellation arose the comparison of the *body* natural and *body* politic,

of which, how far soever it has been deduced, no end has hitherto been found.

In these imaginary similitudes, the same word is used at once in its primitive and metaphorical sense. Thus health, ascribed to the body natural, is opposed to sickness; but attributed to the body politic stands as contrary to adversity. These parallels, therefore, have more of genius, but less of truth; they often please, but they never convince.

Of this kind is a curious speculation frequently indulged by a philosopher of my acquaintance, who had discovered, that the qualities requisite to conversation are very exactly represented by a bowl of punch.

Punch, says this profound investigator, is a liquor compounded of spirit and acid juices, sugar and water. The spirit, volatile and fiery, is the proper emblem of vivacity and wit; the acidity of the lemon will very aptly figure pungency of raillery, and acrimony of censure, sugar is the natural representative of luscious adulation and gentle complaisance; and water is the proper hieroglyphic of easy prattle, innocent and tasteless.

Spirit alone is too powerful for use. It will produce madness rather than merriment; and instead of quenching thirst will inflame the blood. Thus wit, too copiously poured out, agitates the hearer with emotions rather violent than pleasing; every one shrinks from the force of its oppression, the company sits intranced and overpowered; all are astonished, but nobody is pleased.

The acid juices gives this genial liquor all its power of stimulating the palate. Conversation would become dull and vapid, if negligence were not sometimes roused, and sluggishness quickened by due severity of reprehension. But acids unmixed will distort the face and torture the palate; and he that has no other qualities than penetration and asperity, he

whose constant employment is detection and censure, who looks only to find faults, and speaks only to publish them, will soon be dreaded, hated, and avoided.

The taste of sugar is generally pleasing, but it cannot long be eaten by itself. Thus meekness and courtesy will always recommend the first address, but soon pall and nauseate, unless they are associated with more sprightly qualities. The chief use of sugar is to temper the taste of other substances; and softness of behaviour in the same manner mitigates the roughness of contradiction, and allays the bitterness of unwelcome truth.

Water is the universal vehicle by which are conveyed the particles necessary to sustenance and growth, by which thirst is quenched, and all the wants of life and nature are supplied. Thus all the business of the world is transacted by artless and easy talk, neither sublimed by fancy, nor discoloured by affectation, without either the harshness of satire, or the lusciousness of flattery. By this limpid vein of language, curiosity is gratified, and all the knowledge is conveyed which one man is required to impart for the safety or convenience of another. Water is the only ingredient in punch which can be used alone, and with which man is content till fancy has framed an artificial want. Thus while we only desire to have our ignorance informed, we are most delighted with the plainest diction; and it is only in the moments of idleness or pride, that we call for the gratifications of wit or flattery.

He only will please long, who, by tempering the acidity of satire with the sugar of civility, and allaying the heat of wit with the frigidity of humble chat, can make the true punch of conversation; and as that punch can be drank in the greatest quantity which has the largest proportion of water, so that

companion will be oftenest welcome, whose talk flows out with inoffensive copiousness, and unenvied insipidity.

N° 35. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

MR. IDLER;

If it be difficult to persuade the idle to be busy, it is likewise, as experience has taught me, not easy to convince the busy that it is better to be idle. When you shall despair of stimulating sluggishness to motion, I hope you will turn your thoughts towards the means of stilling the bustle of pernicious activity.

I am the unfortunate husband of a *buyer of bargains*. My wife has somewhere heard that a good housewife *never* has any thing to *purchase when it is wanted*. This maxim is often in her mouth, and always in her head. She is not one of those philosophical talkers that speculate without practice, and learn sentences of wisdom only to repeat them; she is always making additions to her stores; she never looks into a broker's shop, but she spies something that may be wanted some time; and it is impossible to make her pass the door of a house where she hears *goods selling by auction*.

Whatever she thinks cheap, she holds it the duty of an œconomist to buy; in consequence of this

maxim, we are encumbered on every side with useless lumber. The servants can scarcely creep to their beds through the chests and boxes that surround them. The carpenter is employed once a week in building closets, fixing cupboards, and fastening shelves; and my house has the appearance of a ship stored for a voyage to the colonies.

I had often observed that advertisements set her on fire; and therefore, pretending to emulate her laudable frugality, I forbade the newspaper to be taken any longer; but my precaution is vain; I know not by what fatality, or by what confederacy, every catalogue of *genuine furniture* comes to her hand, every advertisement of a newspaper newly opened is in her pocket-book, and she knows before any of her neighbours when the stock of any man *leaving off trade* is to be *sold cheap for ready money.*

Such intelligence is to my dear-one the Syren's song. No engagement, no duty, no interest, can withhold her from a sale, from which she always returns congratulating herself upon her dexterity at a bargain; the porter lays down his burthen in the hall; she displays her new acquisitions, and spends the rest of the day in contriving where they shall be put.

As she cannot bear to have any thing incomplete, one purchase necessitates another; she has twenty feather-beds more than she can use, and a late sale has supplied her with a proportionable number of *Whitney* blankets, a large roll of linen for sheets, and five quilts for every bed, which she bought because the seller told her, that if she would clear his hands he would let her have a bargain.

Thus by hourly encroachments my habitation is made narrower and narrower; the dining-room is so

crowded with tables, that dinner scarcely can be served; the parlour is decorated with so many piles of china, that I dare not step within the door; at every turn of the stairs I have a clock, and half the windows of the upper floors are darkened, that shelves may be set before them.

This, however, might be borne, if she would gratify her own inclinations without opposing mine. But I who am idle am luxurious, and she condemns me to live upon salt provision. She knows the loss of buying in small quantities, we have therefore whole hogs and quarters of oxen. Part of our meat is tainted before it is eaten, and part is thrown away because it is spoiled, but she persists in her system, and will never buy any thing by single pennyworths.

The common vice of those who are still grasping at more, is to neglect that which they already possess; but from this failing my charmer is free. It is the great care of her life that the pieces of beef should be boiled in the order in which they are bought; that the second bag of peas should not be opened till the first were eaten; that every feather-bed shall be lain on in its turn; that the carpets should be taken out of the chests once a month and brushed; and the rolls of linen opened now and then before the fire. She is daily inquiring after the best traps for mice, and keeps the rooms always scented by fumigations to destroy the moths. She employs a workman from time to time to adjust six clocks that never go, and clean five jacks that rust in the garret; and a woman in the next alley lives by scouring the brass and pewter, which are only laid up to tarnish again.

She is always imagining some distant time in which she shall use whatever she accumulates; she has four looking-glasses which she cannot hang up in her house, but which will be handsome in more

lofty rooms; and pays rent for the place of a vast copper in some warehouse, because when we live in the country we shall brew our own beer.

Of this life I have long been weary, but I know not how to change it; all the married men whom I consult advise me to have patience; but some old bachelors are of opinion, that since she loves sales so well, she should have a sale of her own; and I have, I think, resolved to open her hoards, and advertise an auction.

I am, SIR,

Your very humble servant,

PETER PLENTY.

N°36. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1758.

THE great differences that disturb the peace of mankind are not about ends, but means. We have all the same general desires, but how those desires shall be accomplished will for ever be disputed. The ultimate purpose of government is temporal, and that of religion is eternal happiness. Hitherto we agree; but here we must part to try, according to the endless varieties of passion and understanding combined with one another, every possible form of government, and every imaginable tenet of religion.

We are told by *Cumberland* that *rectitude*, applied to action or contemplation, is merely metaphorical; and that as a *right* line describes the shortest passage

from point to point, so a *right* action affects a good design by the fewest means; and so likewise a *right* opinion is that which connects distant truths by the shortest train of intermediate propositions.

To find the nearest way from truth to truth, or from purpose to effect, not to use more instruments where fewer will be sufficient, not to move by wheels and levers what will give way to the naked hand, is the great proof of a healthful and vigorous mind, neither feeble with healthful ignorance, nor overburdened with unwieldy knowledge.

But there are men who seem to think nothing so much the characteristic of a genius, as to do common things in an uncommon manner; like *Hudibras*, to *tell the clock by algebra;* or like the lady in Dr. *Young's* satires, *to drink tea by stratagem;* to quit the beaten track only because it is known, and take a new path, however crooked or rough, because the strait was found out before.

Every man speaks and writes with intent to be understood; and it can seldom happen but he that understands himself might convey his notions to another, if, content to be understood, he did not seek to be admired; but when once he begins to contrive how his sentiments may be received, not with most ease to his reader, but with most advantage to himself, he then transfers his consideration from words to sounds, from sentences to periods, and as he grows more elegant becomes less intelligible.

It is difficult to enumerate every species of authors whose labours counteract themselves; the man of exuberance and copiousness, who diffuses every thought through so many diversities of expression, that it is lost like water in a mist; the ponderous dictator of sentences, whose notions are delivered in the lump, and are, like uncoined bullion, of more weight than use; the liberal illustrator, who shows

by examples and comparisons what was clearly seen when it was first proposed; and the stately son of demonstration, who proves with mathematical formality what no man has yet pretended to doubt.

There is a mode of style for which I know not that the masters of oratory have yet found a name; a style by which the most evident truths are so obscured, that they can no longer be perceived, and the most familiar propositions so disguised that they cannot be known. Every other kind of eloquence is the dress of sense; but this is the mask by which a true master of his art will so effectually conceal it, that a man will as easily mistake his own positions, if he meets them thus transformed, as he may pass in a masquerade his nearest acquaintance.

This style may be called the *terrific*, for its chief intention is, to terrify and amaze; it may be termed the *repulsive*, for its natural effect is to drive away the reader; or it may be distinguished, in plain *English*, by the denomination of the *bugbear style*, for it has more terror than danger, and will appear less formidable as it is more nearly approached.

A mother tells her infant, that *two and two make four;* the child remembers the proposition, and is able to count four to all the purposes of life, till the course of his education brings him among philosophers who fright him from his former knowledge, by telling him, that four is a certain aggregate of units; that all numbers being only the repetition of an unit, which, though not a number itself, is the parent, root, or original of all number, *four* is the denomination assigned to a certain number of such repetitions. The only danger is, lest, when he first hears these dreadful sounds, the pupil should run away; if he has but the courage to stay till the conclusion, he will find that, when speculation has done its worst, two and two still make four.

An illustrious example of this species of eloquence may be found in *Letters concerning Mind.* The author begins by declaring, that *the sorts of things are things that now are, have been, and shall be, and the things that strictly* ARE. In this position, except the last clause, in which he uses something of the scholastic language, there is nothing but what every man has heard and imagines himself to know. But who would not believe that some wonderful novelty is presented to his intellect when he is afterwards told, in the true *bugbear* style, that *the* ares, *in the former sense, are things that lie between the* have-beens *and* shall-be's. *The* have-beens *are things that are past; the* shall-be's *are things that are to come; and the things that* ARE, in the latter sense, *are things that have not been, nor shall be, nor stand in the midst of such as are before them, or shall be after them. The things that have been, and shall be, have respect to present, past, and future. Those likewise that now* ARE *have moreover place; that, for instance, which is here, that which is to the east, that which is to the west.*

All this, my dear reader, is very strange; but though it be strange, it is not new; survey these wonderful sentences again, and they will be found to contain nothing more than very plain truths, which till this Author arose had always been delivered in plain language.

N° 37. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1758.

THOSE who are skilled in the extraction and preparation of metals, declare, that iron is every where to be found; and that not only its proper ore is copiously treasured in the caverns of the earth, but that its particles are dispersed throughout all other bodies.

If the extent of the human view could comprehend the whole frame of the universe, I believe it would be found invariably true, that Providence has given that in greatest plenty, which the condition of life makes of greatest use; and that nothing is penuriously imparted or placed far from the reach of man, of which, a more liberal distribution, or more easy acquisition, would increase real and rational felicity.

Iron is common, and gold is rare. Iron contributes so much to supply the wants of nature, that its use constitutes much of the difference between savage and polished life, between the state of him that slumbers in *European* palaces, and him that shelters himself in the cavities of a rock from the chilness of the night, or the violence of the storm. Gold can never be hardened into saws or axes; it can neither furnish instruments of manufacture, utensils of agriculture, nor weapons of defence; its only quality is to shine, and the value of its lustre arises from its scarcity.

Throughout the whole circle, both of natural and moral life, necessaries are as iron, and superfluities as gold. What we really need we may readily obtain; so readily, that far the greater part of mankind has, in the wantonness of abundance, confounded natural

with artificial desires, and invented necessities for the sake of employment, because the mind is impatient of inaction, and life is sustained with so little labour, that the tediousness of idle time cannot otherwise be supported.

Thus plenty is the original cause of many of our needs; and even the poverty, which is so frequent and distressful in civilized nations, proceeds often from that change of manners which opulence has produced. Nature makes us poor only when we want necessaries; but custom gives the name of poverty to the want of superfluities.

When Socrates passed through shops of toys and ornaments, he cried out, *How many things are here which I do not need!* And the same exclamation may every man make who surveys the common accommodations of life.

Superfluity and difficulty begin together. To dress food for the stomach is easy, the art is to irritate the palate when the stomach is sufficed. A rude hand may build walls, form roofs, and lay floors, and provide all that warmth and security require; we only call the nicer artificers to carve the cornice, or to paint the ceilings. Such dress as may enable the body to endure the different seasons, the most unenlightened nations have been able to procure; but the work of science begins in the ambition of distinction, in variations of fashion, and emulation of elegance. Corn grows with easy culture; the gardener's experiments are only employed to exalt the flavors of fruits, and brighten the colours of flowers.

Even of knowledge, those parts are most easy which are generally necessary. The intercourse of society is maintained without the elegances of language. Figures, criticisms, and refinements, are the work of those whom idleness makes weary of themselves. The commerce of the world is carried on by easy

methods of computation. Subtilty and study are required only when questions are invented merely to puzzle, and calculations are extended to show the skill of the calculator. The light of the sun is equally beneficial to him whose eyes tell him that it moves, and to him whose reason persuades him that it stands still; and plants grow with the same luxuriance, whether we suppose earth or water the parent of vegetation.

If we raise our thoughts to nobler inquiries, we shall still find facility concurring with usefulness. No man needs stay to be virtuous till the moralists have determined the essence of virtue; our duty is made apparent by its proximate consequences, though the general and ultimate reason should never be discovered. Religion may regulate the life of him to whom the *Scotists* and *Thomists* are alike unknown; and the assertors of fate and free-will, however different in their talk, agree to act in the same manner.

It is not my intention to depreciate the politer arts or abstruser studies. That curiosity which always succeeds ease and plenty, was undoubtedly given us as a proof of capacity which our present state is not able to fill, as a preparative for some better mode of existence, which shall furnish employment for the whole soul, and where pleasure shall be adequate to our powers of fruition. In the mean time let us gratefully acknowledge that goodness which grants us ease at a cheap rate, which changes the seasons where the nature of heat and cold has not been yet examined, and gives the vicissitudes of day and night to those who never marked the tropics, or numbered the constellations.

N° 38. SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1759.

SINCE the publication of the letter concerning the condition of those who are confined in gaols by their creditors, an inquiry is said to have been made, by which it appears that more than twenty thousand * are at this time prisoners for debt.

We often look with indifference on the successive parts of that, which, if the whole were seen together, would shake us with emotion. A debtor is dragged to prison, pitied for a moment, and then forgotten; another follows him, and is lost alike in the caverns of oblivion; but when the whole mass of calamity rises up at once, when twenty thousand reasonable beings are heard all groaning in unnecessary misery, not by the infirmity of nature, but the mistake or negligence of policy; who can forbear to pity and lament, to wonder and abhor!

There is here no need of declamatory vehemence; we live in an age of commerce and computation; let us therefore coolly inquire what is the sum of evil which the imprisonment of debtors brings upon our country.

It seems to be the opinion of the later computists, that the inhabitants of *England* do not exceed six millions of which twenty thousand is the three hundredth part. What shall we say of the humanity or the wisdom of a nation, that voluntarily sacri-

* This number was at that time confidently published; but the author has since found reason to question the calculation.

fices one in every three hundred to lingering destruction!

The misfortunes of an individual do not extend their influence to many; yet if we consider the effects of consanguinity and friendship, and the general reciprocation of wants and benefits, which make one man dear or necessary to another, it may reasonably be supposed, that every man languishing in prison gives trouble of some kind to two others who love or need him. By this multiplication of misery we see distress extended to the hundredth part of the whole society.

If we estimate at a shilling a day what is lost by the inaction and consumed in the support of each man thus chained down to involuntary idleness, the public loss will rise in one year to three hundred thousand pounds; in ten years to more than a sixth part of our circulating coin.

I am afraid that those who are best acquainted with the state of our prisons will confess that my conjecture is too near the truth, when I suppose that the corrosion of resentment, the heaviness of sorrow, the corruption of confined air, the want of exercise, and sometimes of food, the contagion of diseases, from which there is no retreat, and the severity of tyrants, against whom there can be no resistance, and all the complicated horrors of a prison, put an end every year to the life of one in four of those that are shut up from the common comforts of human life.

Thus perish yearly five thousand men, overborne with sorrow, consumed by famine, or putrified by filth; many of them in the most vigorous and useful part of life; for the thoughtless and imprudent are commonly young, and the active and busy are seldom old.

According to the rule generally received, which supposes that one in thirty dies yearly, the race of

man way be said to be renewed at the end of thirty years. Who would have believed till now, that of every *English* generation, an hundred and fifty thousand perish in our gaols! that in every century, a nation eminent for science, studious of commerce, ambitious of empire, should willingly lose, in noisome dungeons, five hundred thousand of its inhabitants; a number greater than has ever been destroyed in the same time by the pestilence and sword!

A very late occurrence may show us the value of the number which we thus condemn to be useless; in the re-establishment of the trained bands, thirty thousand are considered as a force sufficient against all exigencies. While, therefore, we detain twenty thousand in prison, we shut up in darkness and uselessness two-thirds of an army which ourselves judge equal to the defence of our country.

The monastic institutions have been often blamed as tending to retard the increase of mankind. And perhaps retirement ought rarely to be permitted, except to those whose employment is consistent with abstraction, and who, though solitary, will not be idle; to those whom infirmity makes useless to the commonwealth, or to those who have paid their due proportion to society, and who, having lived for others, may be honourably dismissed to live for themselves. But whatever be the evil or the folly of these retreats, those have no right to censure them whose prisons contain greater numbers than the monasteries of other countries. It is, surely, less foolish and less criminal to permit inaction than compel it; to comply with doubtful opinions of happiness, than condemn to certain and apparent misery; to indulge the extravagances of erroneous piety, than to multiply and enforce temptations to wickedness.

The misery of gaols is not half their evil: they are filled with every corruption which poverty and wick-

edness can generate between them; with all the shameless and profligate enormities that can be produced by the impudence of ignominy, the rage of want, and the malignity of despair. In a prison, the awe of the public eye is lost, and the power of the law is spent; there are few fears, there are no blushes. The lewd inflame the lewd, the audacious harden the audacious. Every one fortifies himself as he can against his own sensibility, endeavours to practise on others the arts which are practised on himself; and gains the kindness of his associates by similitude of manners.

Thus some sink amidst their misery, and others survive only to propagate villainy. It may be hoped, that our lawgivers will at length take away from us this power of starving and depraving one another; but, if there be any reason why this inveterate evil should not be removed in our age, which true policy has enlightened beyond any former time, let those, whose writings form the opinions and the practices of their contemporaries, endeavour to transfer the reproach of such imprisonment from the debtor to the creditor, till universal infamy shall pursue the wretch whose wantonness of power, or revenge of disappointment, condemns another to torture and to ruin; till he shall be hunted through the world as an enemy to man, and find in riches no shelter from contempt.

Surely, he whose debtor has perished in prison, although he may acquit himself of deliberate murder, must at least have his mind clouded with discontent, when he considers how much another has suffered from him; when he thinks on the wife bewailing her husband, or the children begging the bread which their father would have earned. If there are any made so obdurate by avarice or cruelty, as to revolve these consequences without dread or pity, I must

leave them to be awakened by some other power, for I write only to human beings.

N° 39. SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

As none look more diligently about them than those who have nothing to do, or who do nothing, I suppose it has not escaped your observation, that the bracelet, an ornament of great antiquity, has been for some years revived among the *English* ladies.

The genius of our nation is said, I know not for what reason, to appear rather in improvement than invention. The bracelet was known in the earliest ages; but it was formerly only a hoop of gold, or a cluster of jewels, and showed nothing but the wealth or vanity of the wearer; till our ladies, by carrying pictures on their wrists, made their ornaments works of fancy and exercises of judgment.

This addition of art to luxury is one of the innumerable proofs that might be given of the late increase of female erudition; and I have often congratulated myself that my life has happened at a time when those, on whom so much of human felicity depends, have learned to think as well as speak, and when respect takes possession of the ear, while love is entering at the eye.

I have observed, that, even by the suffrages of their own sex, those ladies are accounted wisest, who do

not yet disdain to be taught; and therefore, I shall offer a few hints for the completion of the bracelet, without any dread of the fate of *Orpheus*.

To the ladies who wear the pictures of their husbands or children, or any other relations, I can offer nothing more decent or more proper. It is reasonable to believe that she intends at least to perform her duty, who carries a perpetual excitement to recollection and caution, whose own ornaments must upbraid her with every failure, and who, by an open violation of her engagements, must for ever forfeit her bracelet.

Yet I know not whether it is the interest of the husband to solicit very earnestly a place on the bracelet. If his image be not in the heart, it is of small avail to hang it on the hand. A husband encircled with diamonds and rubies may gain some esteem, but will never excite love. He that thinks himself most secure of his wife, should be fearful of persecuting her continually with his presence. The joy of life is variety; the tenderest love requires to be rekindled by intervals of absence; and Fidelity herself will be wearied with transferring her eye only from the same man to the same picture.

In many countries the condition of every woman is known by her dress. Marriage is rewarded with some honourable distinction, which celibacy is forbidden to usurp. Some such information a bracelet might afford. The ladies might enrol themselves in distinct classes, and carry in open view the emblems of their order. The bracelet of the authoress may exhibit the Muses in a grove of laurel; the housewife may show *Penelope* with her web; the votress of a single life may carry *Ursula* with her troop of virgins; the gamester may have Fortune with her wheel; and those women *that have no character at all*,

may display a field of white enamel, as imploring help to fill up the vacuity.

There is a set of ladies who have outlived most animal pleasures, and, having nothing rational to put in their place, solace with cards the loss of what time has taken away, and the want of what wisdom, having never been courted, has never given. For these, I know not how to provide a proper decoration, They cannot be numbered among the gamesters; for though they are always at play, they play for nothing, and never rise to the dignity of hazard or the reputation of skill. They neither love nor are loved, and cannot be supposed to contemplate any human image with delight. Yet, though they despair to please, they always wish to be fine, and therefore cannot be without a bracelet. To this sisterhood I can recommend nothing more likely to please them than the king of clubs, a personage very comely and majestic, who will never meet their eyes without reviving the thought of some past or future party, and who may be displayed in the act of dealing with grace and propriety.

But the bracelet which might be most easily introduced into general use is a small convex mirror, in which the lady may see herself whenever she shall lift her hand. This will be a perpetual source of delight. Other ornaments are of use only in public, but this will furnish gratifications to solitude. This will show a face that must always please; she who is followed by admirers will carry about her a perpetual justification of the public voice; and she who passes without notice may appeal from prejudice to her own eyes.

But I know not why the privilege of the bracelet should be confined to women; it was in former ages worn by heroes in battle; and as modern soldiers are

always distinguished by splendor of dress, I should rejoice to see the bracelet added to the cockade.

In hope of this ornamental innovation, I have spent some thoughts upon military bracelets. There is no passion more heroic than love; and therefore I should be glad to see the sons of *England* marching in the field, every man with the picture of a woman of honour bound upon his hand. But since in the army, as every where else, there will always be men who love nobody but themselves, or whom no woman of honour will permit to love her, there is a necessity of some other distinctions and devices.

I have read of a prince who, having lost a town, ordered the name of it to be every morning shouted in his ear till it should be recovered. For the same purpose I think the prospect of *Minorca* might be properly worn on the hands of some of our generals: others might delight their countrymen, and dignify themselves with a view of *Rochefort* as it appeared to them at sea: and those that shall return from the conquest of *America*, may exhibit the warehouse of *Frontenac*, with an inscription denoting, that it was taken in less than three years by less than twenty thousand men.

I am, SIR, &c.

TOM TOY.

N° 40. SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 1759.

THE practice of appending to the narratives of public transactions more minute and domestic intelligence, and filling the newspapers with advertisements, has grown up by slow degrees to its present state.

Genius is shown only by invention. The man who first took advantage of the general curiosity that was excited by a siege or battle, to betray the readers of news into the knowledge of the shop where the best puffs and powder were to be sold, was undoubtedly a man of great sagacity and profound skill in the nature of man. But when he had once shown the way, it was easy to follow him; and every man now knows a ready method of informing the public of all that he desires to buy or sell, whether his wares be material or intellectual; whether he makes clothes, or teaches the mathematics; whether he be a tutor that wants a pupil, or a pupil that wants a tutor.

Whatever is common is despised. Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused, and it is therefore become necessary to gain attention by magnificence of promises, and by eloquence sometimes sublime and sometimes pathetic.

Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement. I remember a *wash-ball* that had a quality truly wonderful—it gave *an exquisite edge to the razor.* And there are now to be sold, *for ready money only,* some *duvets for bed-coverings, of down, beyond comparison, superior to what is called otter-down,* and in-

deed such, that its *many excellences cannot be here set forth.* With one excellence we are made acquainted —*it is warmer than four or five blankets, and lighter than one.*

There are some, however, that know the prejudice of mankind in favour of modest sincerity. The vender of the *beautifying fluid* sells a lotion that repels pimples, washes away freckles, smooths the skin, and plumps the flesh; and yet, with a generous abhorrence of ostentation, confesses, that it will not *restore the bloom of fifteen to a lady of fifty.*

The true pathos of advertisements must have sunk deep into the heart of every man that remembers the zeal shown by the seller of the *anodyne necklace*, for the ease and safety *of poor toothing infants*, and the affection with which he warned every mother, that *she would never forgive herself* if her infant should perish without a necklace.

I cannot but remark to the celebrated author who gave, in his notifications of the camel and dromedary, so many specimens of the genuine sublime, that there is now arrived another subject yet more worthy of his pen. *A famous Mohawk Indian warrior, who took* Dieskaw *the French general prisoner, dressed in the same manner with the native Indians when they go to war, with his face and body painted, with his scalping-knife, tom-ax and all other implements of war! a sight worthy the curiosity of every true Briton!* This is a very powerful description; but a critic of great refinement would say, that it conveys rather *horror* than *terror.* An Indian, dressed as he goes to war, may bring company together; but if he carries the scalping-knife, and tom-ax, there are many true Britons that will never be persuaded to see him but through a grate.

It has been remarked by the severer judges, that the salutary sorrow of tragic scenes is too soon ef-

faced by the merriment of the epilogue; the same inconvenience arises from the improper disposition of advertisements. The noblest objects may be so associated as to be made ridiculous. The camel and dromedary themselves might have lost much of their dignity between *the true flower of mustard* and the *original Daffy's elixir;* and I could not but feel some indignation, when I found this illustrious *Indian* warrior immediately succeeded by *a fresh parcel of Dublin butter.*

The trade of advertising is now so near to perfection, that it is not easy to propose any improvement. But as every art ought to be exercised in due subordination to the public good, I cannot but propose it as a moral question to these masters of the public ear, Whether they do not sometimes play too wantonly with our passions, as when the registrar of lottery tickets invites us to his shop by an account of the prizes which he sold last year; and whether the advertising controvertists do not indulge asperity of language without any adequate provocation; as in the dispute about *straps for razors*, now happily subsided, and in the altercation which at present subsists concerning *eau de luce?*

In an advertisement it is allowed to every man to speak well of himself, but I know not why he should assume the privilege of censuring his neighbour. He may proclaim his own virtue or skill, but ought not to exclude others from the same pretensions.

Every man that advertises his own excellence should write with some consciousness of character which dares to call the attention of the public. He should remember that his name is to stand in the same paper with those of the king of *Prussia* and the emperor of *Germany*, and endeavour to make himself worthy of such association.

Some regard is likewise to be paid to posterity.

There are men of diligence and curiosity who treasure up the papers of the day merely because others neglect them, and in time they will be scarce. When these collections shall be read in another century, how will numberless contradictions be reconciled; and how shall fame be possibly distributed among the taylors and boddice-makers of the present age?

Surely these things deserve consideration. It is enough for me to have hinted my desire that these abuses may be rectified; but such is the state of nature, that what all have the right of doing, many will attempt without sufficient care or due qualifications.

N° 41. SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 1759.

THE following letter relates to an affliction perhaps not necessary to be imparted to the public; but I could not persuade myself to suppress it, because I think I know the sentiments to be sincere, and I feel no disposition to provide for this day any other entertainment.

At tu quisquis eris, miseri qui crude poetæ
Credideris fletu funera digna tuo,
Hæc postrema tibi sit flendi causa, fluatque
Lenis inoffenso vitaque morsque gradu.

MR. IDLER;

NOTWITHSTANDING the warnings of philosophers, and the daily examples of losses and misfortunes which life forces upon our observation, such is the

absorption of our thoughts in the business of the present day, such the resignation of our reason to empty hopes of future felicity, or such our unwillingness to foresee what we dread, that every calamity comes suddenly upon us, and not only presses us as a burthen, but crushes as a blow.

There are evils which happen out of the common course of nature, against which it is no reproach not to be provided. A flash of lightning intercepts the traveller in his way. The concussion of an earthquake heaps the ruins of cities upon their inhabitants. But other miseries time brings, though silently, yet visibly, forward by its even lapse, which yet approach us unseen, because we turn our eyes away, and seize us unresisted, because we could not arm ourselves against them but by setting them before us.

That it is vain to shrink from what cannot be avoided, and to hide that from ourselves which must sometime be found, is a truth which we all know, but which all neglect, and perhaps none more than the speculative reasoner, whose thoughts are always from home, whose eye wanders over life, whose fancy dances after meteors of happiness kindled by itself, and who examines every thing rather than his own state.

Nothing is more evident than that the decays of age must terminate in death; yet there is no man, says *Tully*, who does not believe that he may yet live another year; and there is none who does not, upon the same principle, hope another year for his parent or his friend: but the fallacy will be in time detected; the last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects.

The loss of a friend upon whom the heart was fixed, to whom every wish and endeavour tended, is

a state of dreary desolation, in which the mind looks abroad impatient of itself, and finds nothing but emptiness and horror. The blameless life, the artless tenderness, the pious simplicity, the modest resignation, the patient sickness, and the quiet death, are remembered only to add value to the loss, to aggravate regret for what cannot be amended, to deepen sorrow for what cannot be recalled.

These are the calamities by which Providence gradually disengages us from the love of life. Other evils fortitude may repel, or hope may mitigate; but irreparable privation leaves nothing to exercise resolution or flatter expectation. The dead cannot return, and nothing is left us here but languishment and grief.

Yet such is the course of nature, that whoever lives long must outlive those whom he loves and honours. Such is the condition of our present existence, that life must one time lose its associations, and every inhabitant of the earth must walk downward to the grave alone and unregarded, without any partner of his joy or grief, without any interested witness of his misfortunes or success.

Misfortune, indeed, he may yet feel; for where is the bottom of the misery of man? But what is success to him that has none to enjoy it? Happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another.

We know little of the state of departed souls, because such knowledge is not necessary to a good life. Reason deserts us at the brink of the grave, and can give no farther intelligence. Revelation is not wholly silent. *There is joy in the angels of Heaven over one sinner that repenteth;* and surely this joy is not incommunicable to souls disentangled from the body, and made like angels.

Let hope therefore dictate, what revelation does not confute, that the union of souls may still remain; and

that we who are struggling with sin, sorrow, and infirmities, may have our part in the attention and kindness of those who have finished their course, and are now receiving their reward.

These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater Power? and to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the greatest POWER is the BEST?

Surely there is no man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the *gospel*, which has brought *life and immortality to light*. The precepts of *Epicurus*, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but not content us. The dictates of *Zeno*, who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of Him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurance of another and a better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but religion only can give patience.

I am, &c.

Nº 42. SATURDAY, FEB. 3, 1759.

THE subject of the following letter is not wholly unmentioned by the RAMBLER. The SPECTATOR has also a letter containing a case not much different. I hope my correspondent's performance is more an effort of genius, than effusion of the passions; and that she hath rather attempted to paint some possible distress, than really feels the evils which she has described.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

THERE is a cause of misery, which, though certainly known both to you and your predecessors, has been little taken notice of in your papers; I mean the snares that the bad behaviour of parents extends over the paths of life which their children are to tread after them; and as I make no doubt but the *Idler* holds the shield for virtue as well as the glass for folly, that he will employ his leisure hours as much to his own satisfaction, in warning his readers against a danger, as in laughing them out of a fashion: for this reason I am tempted to ask admittance for my story in your paper, though it has nothing to recommend it but truth, and the honest wish of warning others to shun the track which I am afraid may lead me at last to ruin.

I am the child of a father, who, having always lived in one spot in the country where he was born, and having had no genteel education himself, thought no qualifications in the world desirable but as they led up to fortune, and no learning necessary to happiness but such as might most effectually teach me to make the best market of myself: I was unfortunately born a beauty, to a full sense of which my father took care to flatter me; and having, when very young, put me to a school in the country, afterwards transplanted me to another in town, at the instigation of his friends, where his ill-judged fondness let me remain no longer than to learn just enough experience to convince me of the sordidness of his views, to give me an idea of perfections which my present situation will never suffer me to reach, and to teach me sufficient morals to dare to despise what is bad, though it be in a father.

Thus equipped (as he thought completely) for life, I was carried back into the country, and lived with him and my mother in a small village, within a few miles of the county-town; where I mixed, at first with reluctance, among company which, though I never despised, I could not approve, as they were brought up with other inclinations, and narrower views than my own. My father took great pains to show me every where, both at his own house, and at such public diversions as the country afforded: he frequently told the people all he had was for his daughter; took care to repeat the civilities I had received from all his friends in *London*; told how much I was admired, and all his little ambition could suggest to set me in a stronger light.

Thus have I continued tricked out for sale, as I may call it, and doomed, by parental authority, to a state little better than that of prostitution. I look on myself as growing cheaper every hour, and am

losing all that honest pride, that modest confidence, in which the virgin dignity consists. Nor does my misfortune stop here: though many would be too generous to impute the follies of a father to a child whose heart has set her above them; yet I am afraid the most charitable of them will hardly think it possible for me to be a daily spectatress of his vices without tacitly allowing them, and at last consenting to them, as the eye of the frighted infant is, by degrees, reconciled to the darkness of which at first it was afraid. It is a common opinion, he himself must very well know, that vices, like diseases, are often hereditary; and that the property of the one is to infect the manners, as the other poisons the springs of life.

Yet this, though bad, is not the worst; my father deceives himself the hopes of the very child he has brought into the world; he suffers his house to be the seat of drunkenness, riot, and irreligion; who seduces, almost in my sight, the menial servant, converses with the prostitute, and corrupts the wife! Thus I, who from my earliest dawn of reason was taught to think that at my approach every eye sparkled with pleasure, or was dejected as conscious of superior charms, am excluded from society, through fear lest I should partake, if not of my father's crimes, at least of his reproach. Is a parent, who is so little solicitous for the welfare of a child, better than a pirate who turns a wretch adrift in a boat at sea, without a star to steer by, or an anchor to hold it fast? Am I not to lay all my miseries at those doors which ought to have opened only for my protection? And if doomed to add at last one more to the number of those wretches whom neither the world nor its law befriends, may I not justly say that I have been awed by a parent into ruin? But though a parent's power is screened from

insult and violation by the very words of Heaven, yet surely no laws divine or human, forbid me to remove myself from the malignant shade of a plant that poisons all around it, blasts the bloom of youth, checks its improvements, and makes all its flowrets fade; but to whom can the wretched, can the dependent fly? For me to fly a father's house, is to be a beggar: I have only one comfort amidst my anxieties, a pious relation, who bids me appeal to Heaven for a witness to my just intentions, fly as a deserted wretch to its protection; and, being asked who my father is, point, like the ancient philosopher, with my finger to the heavens.

The hope in which I write this, is, that you will give it a place in your paper; and, as your essays sometimes find their way into the country, that my father may read my story there; and, if not for his own sake yet for mine, spare to perpetuate that worst of calamities to me, the loss of character, from which all his dissimulation has not been able to rescue himself. Tell the world, Sir, that it is possible for virtue to keep its throne unshaken without any other guard than itself; that it is possible to maintain that purity of thought so necessary to the completion of human excellence even in the midst of temptations; when they have no friend within, nor are assisted by the voluntary indulgence of vicious thoughts.

If the insertion of a story like this does not break in on the plan of your paper, you have it in your power to be a better friend than her father to

PERDITA.

N° 43. SATURDAY, FEB. 10, 1759.

The natural advantages which arise from the position of the earth which we inhabit, with respect to the other planets, afford much employment to mathematical speculation, by which it has been discovered, that no other conformation of the system could have given such commodious distributions of light and heat, or imparted fertility and pleasure to so great a part of a revolving sphere.

It may be, perhaps, observed by the moralist, with equal reason, that our globe seems particularly fitted for the residence of a being, placed here only for a short time, whose task is, to advance himself to a higher and happier state of existence, by unremitted vigilance of caution, and activity of virtue.

The duties required of a man are such as human nature does not willingly perform, and such as those are inclined to delay who yet intend some time to fulfil them. It was therefore necessary that this universal reluctance should be counteracted, and the drowsiness of hesitation wakened into resolve; that the danger of procrastination should be always in view, and the fallacies of security be hourly detected.

To this end all the appearances of nature uniformly conspire. Whatever we see on every side reminds us of the lapse of time and the flux of life. The day and night succeed each other, the rotation of seasons diversifies the year, the sun rises, attains the meridian, declines, and sets; and the moon every night changes its form.

The day has been considered as an image of the year, and the year as the representation of life. The morning answers to the spring, and the spring to childhood and youth; the noon corresponds to the summer, and the summer to the strength of manhood. The evening is an emblem of autumn, and autumn of declining life. The night with its silence and darkness shows the winter, in which all the powers of vegetation are benumbed; and the winter points out the time when life shall cease, with its hopes and pleasures.

He that is carried forward, however swiftly, by a motion equable and easy, perceives not the change of place but by the variation of objects. If the wheel of life, which rolls thus silently along, passed on through undistinguishable uniformity, we should never mark its approaches to the end of the course. If one hour were like another; if the passage of the sun did not show that the day is wasting; if the change of seasons did not impress upon us the flight of the year; quantities of duration equal to days and years would glide unobserved. If the parts of time were not variously coloured, we should never discern their departure or succession, but should live thoughtless of the past, and careless of the future, without will, and perhaps without power, to compute the periods of life, or to compare the time which is already lost with that which may probably remain.

But the course of time is so visibly marked, that it is observed even by the birds of passage, and by nations who have raised their minds very little above animal instinct: there are human beings whose language does not supply them with words by which they can number five, but I have read of none that have not names for day and night, for summer and winter.

Yet it is certain that these admonitions of nature,

however forcible, however importunate, are too often vain; and that many who mark with such accuracy the course of time, appear to have little sensibility of the decline of life. Every man has something to do which he neglects; every man has faults to conquer which he delays to combat.

So little do we accustom ourselves to consider the effects of time, that things necessary and certain often surprise us like unexpected contingencies. We leave the beauty in her bloom, and, after an absence of twenty years, wonder, at our return, to find her faded. We meet those whom we left children, and can scarcely persuade ourselves to treat them as men. The traveller visits in age those countries through which he rambled in his youth, and hopes for merriment at the old place. The man of business, wearied with unsatisfactory prosperity, retires to the town of his nativity, and expects to play away the last years with the companions of his childhood, and recover youth in the fields where he once was young.

From this inattention, so general and so mischievous, let it be every man's study to exempt himself. Let him that desires to see others happy, make haste to give while his gift can be enjoyed, and remember that every moment of delay takes away something from the value of his benefaction. And let him, who purposes his own happiness, reflect, that while he forms his purpose the day rolls on, and *the night cometh, when no man can work!*

N° 44. SATURDAY, FEB. 17, 1759.

MEMORY is, among the faculties of the human mind, that of which we make the most frequent use, or rather that of which the agency is incessant or perpetual. Memory is the primary and fundamental power, without which there could be no other intellectual operation. Judgment and ratiocination suppose something already known, and draw their decisions only from experience. Imagination selects ideas from the treasures of remembrance, and produces novelty only by varied combinations. We do not even form conjectures of distant, or anticipations of future events, but by concluding what is possible from what is past.

The two offices of memory are collection and distribution; by one images are accumulated, and by the other produced for use. Collection is always the employment of our first years; and distribution commonly that of our advanced age.

To collect and reposit the various forms of things, if far the most pleasing part of mental occupation. We are naturally delighted with novelty, and there is a time when all that we see is new. When first we enter into the world, whithersoever we turn our eyes, they meet Knowledge with Pleasure at her side; every diversity of nature pours ideas in upon the soul; neither search nor labour are necessary; we have nothing more to do than to open our eyes, and curiosity is gratified.

Much of the pleasure which the first survey of the world affords, is exhausted before we are con-

scious of our own felicity, or able to compare our condition with some other possible state. We have therefore few traces of the joy of our earliest discoveries; yet we all remember a time when nature had so many untasted gratifications, that every excursion gave delight which can now be found no longer, when the noise of a torrent, the rustle of a wood, the song of birds, or the play of lambs, had power to fill the attention, and suspend all perception of the course of time.

But these easy pleasures are soon at an end; we have seen in a very little time so much, that we call out for new objects of observation, and endeavour to find variety in books and life. But study is laborious, and not always satisfactory; and conversation has its pains as well as pleasures; we are willing to learn, but not willing to be taught; we are pained by ignorance, but pained yet more by another's knowledge.

From the vexation of pupillage men commonly set themselves free about the middle of life, by shutting up the avenues of intelligence, and resolving to rest in their present state; and they, whose ardour of inquiry continues longer, find themselves insensibly forsaken by their instructors. As every man advances in life, the proportion between those that are younger and that are older than himself is continually changing; and he that has lived half a century finds few that do not require from him that information which he once expected from those that went before him.

Then it is that the magazines of memory are opened, and the stores of accumulated knowledge are displayed by vanity or benevolence, or in honest commerce of mutual interest. Every man wants others, and is therefore glad when he is wanted by them. And as few men will endure the labour of

intense meditation without necessity, he that has learned enough for his profit or his honour, seldom endeavours after further acquisitions.

The pleasure of recollecting speculative notions would not be much less than that of gaining them, if they could be kept pure and unmingled with the passages of life; but such is the necessary concatenation of our thoughts, that good and evil are linked together, and no pleasure recurs but associated with pain. Every revived idea reminds us of a time when something was enjoyed that is now lost, when some hope was yet not blasted, when some purpose had yet not languished into sluggishness or indifference.

Whether it be that life has more vexations than comforts, or, what is in the event just the same, that evil makes deeper impression than good, it is certain that no man can review the time past without heaviness of heart. He remembers many calamities incurred by folly, many opportunities lost by negligence. The shades of the dead rise up before him; and he laments the companions of his youth, the partners of his amusements, the assistants of his labours, whom the hand of death has snatched away.

When an offer was made to *Themistocles* of teaching him the art of memory, he answered, that he would rather wish for the art of forgetfulness. He felt his imagination haunted by phantoms of misery which he was unable to suppress, and would gladly have calmed his thoughts with some *oblivious antidote*. In this we all resemble one another: the hero and the sage are, like vulgar mortals, overburthened by the weight of life; all shrink from recollection, and all wish for an art of forgetfulness.

N° 45. SATURDAY, FEB. 24, 1759.

THERE is in many minds a kind of vanity exerted to the disadvantage of themselves; a desire to be praised for superior acuteness discovered only in the degradation of their species, or censure of their country.

Defamation is sufficiently copious. The general lampooner of mankind may find long exercise for his zeal or wit, in the defects of nature, the vexations of life, the follies of opinion, and the corruptions of practice. But fiction is easier than discernment; and most of these writers spare themselves the labour of inquiry, and exhaust their virulence upon imaginary crimes, which, as they never existed, can never be mended.

That the painters find no encouragement among the *English* for many other works than portraits, has been imputed to national selfishness. 'Tis vain, says the satirist, to set before any *Englishman* the scenes of landscapes, or the heroes of history; nature and antiquity are nothing in his eye; he has no value but for himself, nor desires any copy but of his own form.

Whoever is delighted with his own picture must derive his pleasure from the pleasure of another. Every man is always present to himself, and has, therefore, little need of his own resemblance, nor can desire it, but for the sake of those whom he loves, and by whom he hopes to be remembered. This use of the art is a natural and reasonable consequence of affection; and though, like other

human actions, it is often complicated with pride, yet even such pride is more laudable than that by which palaces are covered with pictures, that however excellent, neither imply the owner's virtue nor excite it.

Genius is chiefly exerted in historical pictures; and the art of the painter of portraits is often lost in the obscurity of his subject. But it is in painting as in life, what is greatest is not always best. I should grieve to see *Reynolds* transfer to heroes and to goddesses, to empty splendor and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in reviving tenderness, in quickening the affections of the absent, and continuing the presence of the dead.

Yet in a nation great and opulent there is room, and ought to be patronage, for an art like that of painting through all its diversities; and it is to be wished, that the reward now offered for an historical picture may excite an honest emulation, and give beginning to an *English* school.

It is not very easy to find an action or event that can be efficaciously represented by a painter.

He must have an action not successive but instantaneous; for the time of a picture is a single moment. For this reason the death of *Hercules* cannot well be painted, though at the first view it flatters the imagination with very glittering ideas: the gloomy mountain overhanging the sea, and covered with trees, some bending to the wind, and some torn from the root by the raging hero; the violence with which he rends from his shoulders the invenomed garment; the propriety with which his muscular nakedness may be displayed: the death of *Lycas* whirled from the promontory; the gigantic presence of *Philoctetes;* the blaze of the fatal pile, which the deities behold with grief and terror from the sky.

All these images fill the mind, but will not compose a picture, because they cannot be united in a single moment. *Hercules* must have rent his flesh at one time, and tossed *Lycas* into the air at another; he must first tear up the trees, and then lie down upon the pile.

The action must be circumstantial and distinct. There is a passage in the Iliad which cannot be read without strong emotions. A *Trojan* prince, seized by *Achilles* in the battle, falls at his feet, and in moving terms supplicates for life. *How can a wretch like thee*, says the haughty *Greek*, *intreat to live, when thou knowest that the time must come when Achilles is to die?* This cannot be painted, because no peculiarity of attitude or disposition can so supply the place of language as to impress the sentiment.

The event painted must be such as excites passion, and different passions in the several actors, or a tumult of contending passion in the chief.

Perhaps the discovery of *Ulysses* by his nurse is of this kind. The surprise of the nurse mingled with joy; that of *Ulysses* checked by prudence, and clouded by solicitude; and the distinctness of the action by which the scar is found; all concur to complete the subject. But the picture, having only two figures, will want variety.

A much nobler assemblage may be furnished by the death of *Epaminondas*. The mixture of gladness and grief in the face of the messenger who brings his dying general an account of the victory; the various passions of the attendants; the sublimity of composure in the hero, while the dart is by his own command drawn from his side, and the faint gleam of satisfaction that diffuses itself over the languor of death, are worthy of that pencil which yet I do not wish to see employed upon them.

If the design were not too multifarious and extensive, I should wish that our painters would attempt the dissolution of the parliament by *Cromwell*. The point of time may be chosen when *Cromwell* looked round the Pandæmonium with contempt, ordered the bauble to be taken away; and *Harrison* laid hands on the Speaker to drag him from the chair.

The various appearances which rage and terror, and astonishment, and guilt, might exhibit in the faces of that hateful assembly, of whom the principal persons may be faithfully drawn from portraits or prints; the irresolute repugnance of some, the hypocritical submission of others, the ferocious insolence of *Cromwell*, the rugged brutality of *Harrison*, and the general trepidation of fear and wickedness would, if some proper disposition could be contrived, make a picture of unexampled variety, and irresistible instruction.

N° 46. SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1759.

MR. IDLER;

I AM encouraged, by the notice you have taken of *Betty Broom*, to represent the miseries which I suffer from a species of tyranny which, I believe, is not very uncommon, though perhaps it may have escaped the observation of those who converse little with fine ladies, or see them only in their public characters.

To this method of venting my vexation I am the more inclined, because if I do not complain to you, I must burst in silence; for my mistress has teazed me, and teazed me till I can hold no longer, and yet I must not tell her of her tricks. The girls that live in common services, can quarrel, and give warning, and find other places; but we that live with great ladies, if we once offend them, have nothing left but to return into the country.

I am waiting-maid to a lady who keeps the best company, and is seen at every place of fashionable resort. I am envied by all the maids in the square, for few countesses leave off so many clothes as my mistress, and nobody shares with me: so that I supply two families in the country with finery for the assizes and horse-races, besides what I wear myself. The steward and house-keeper have joined against me to procure my removal, that they may advance a relation of their own; but their designs are found out by my lady, who says I need not fear them, for she will never have dowdies about her.

You would think, Mr. *Idler*, like others, that I am very happy, and may well be contented with my lot. But I will tell you. My lady has an odd humour. She never orders any thing in direct words, for she loves a sharp girl that can take a hint.

I would not have you suspect that she has any thing to hint which she is ashamed to speak at length; for none can have greater purity of sentiment, or rectitude of intention. She has nothing to hide, yet nothing will she tell. She always gives her directions oblique and allusively, by the mention of something relative or consequential, without any other purpose than to exercise my acuteness and her own.

It is impossible to give a notion of this style otherwise than by examples. One night, when she

had sat writing letters till it was time to be dressed, *Molly*, said she, *the Ladies are all to be at Court to-night in white aprons.* When she means that I should send to order the chair, she says, *I think the streets are clean, I may venture to walk.* When she would have something put into its place, she bids me *lay it on the floor.* If she would have me snuff the candles, she asks *whether I think her eyes are like a cat's?* If she thinks her chocolate delayed, she talks of *the benefit of abstinence.* If any needle-work is forgotten, she supposes *that I have heard of the lady who died by pricking her finger.*

She always imagines that I can recall every thing past from a single word. If she wants her head from the milliner, she only says, *Molly, you know Mrs. Tape.* If she would have the mantua-maker sent for, she remarks *that Mr. Taffety, the mercer, was here last week.* She ordered, a fortnight ago, that the first time she was abroad all day I should choose her a new set of coffee-cups at the china-shop: of this she reminded me yesterday, as she was going down stairs, by saying, *You can't find your way now to Pall-Mall.*

All this would not vex me, if, by increasing my trouble, she spared her own; but, dear Mr. *Idler*, is it not as easy to say *coffee-cups*, as *Pall-Mall?* and to tell me in plain words what I am to do, and when it is to be done, as to torment her own head with the labour of finding hints, and mine with that of understanding them?

When first I came to this lady, I had nothing like the learning that I have now; for she has many books, and I have much time to read; so that of late I have seldom missed her meaning: but when she first took me I was an ignorant girl; and she, who, as is very common, confounded want of knowledge with want of understanding, began once to

despair of bringing me to any thing, because, when I came into her chamber at the call of her bell, she asked me, *Whether we lived in Zembla;* and I did not guess the meaning of her inquiry, but modestly answered that *I could not tell.* She had happened to ring once when I did not hear her, and meant to put me in mind of that country where sounds are said to be congealed by the frost.

Another time, as I was dressing her head, she began to talk on a sudden of *Medusa*, and *snakes*, and *men turned into stone, and maids that, if they were not watched, would let their mistresses be Gorgons.* I looked round me half frightened, and quite bewildered; till at last, finding that her literature was thrown away upon me, she bid me, with great vehemence, reach the curling-irons.

It is not without some indignation, Mr. *Idler*, that I discover, in these artifices of vexation, something worse than foppery or caprice; a mean delight in superiority, which knows itself in no danger of reproof or opposition; a cruel pleasure in seeing the perplexity of a mind obliged to find what is studiously concealed, and a mean indulgence of petty malevolence, in the sharp censure of involuntary, and very often of inevitable failings. When, beyond her expectation, I hit upon her meaning, I can perceive a sudden cloud of disappointment spread over her face; and have sometimes been afraid lest I should lose her favour by understanding her when she means to puzzle me.

This day, however, she has conquered my sagacity. When she went out of her dressing-room she said nothing but, *Molly you know*, and hastened to her chariot. What I am to know is yet a secret; but if I do not know before she comes back, what I have yet no means of discovering, she will make

my dulness a pretence for a fortnight's ill humour, treat me as a creature devoid of the faculties necessary to the common duties of life, and perhaps give the next gown to the housekeeper.

I am, SIR,

Your humble servant,

MOLLY QUICK.

N° 47. SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

MR. IDLER;

I AM the unfortunate wife of a city wit, and cannot but think that my case may deserve equal compassion with any of those which have been represented in your paper.

I married my husband within three months after the expiration of his apprenticeship; we put our money together, and furnished a large and splendid shop, in which he was for five years and a half diligent and civil. The notice which curiosity or kindness commonly bestows on beginners, was continued by confidence and esteem; one customer, pleased with his treatment and his bargain, recommended another; and we were busy behind the counter from morning to night.

Thus every day increased our wealth and our reputation. My husband was often invited to dinner openly on the *Exchange* by hundred-thousand-pounds men; and whenever I went to any of the halls, the wives of the aldermen made me low courtesies. We always took up our notes before the day, and made all considerable payments by drafts upon our banker.

You will easily believe that I was well enough pleased with my condition! for what happiness can be greater than that of growing every day richer and richer? I will not deny that, imagining myself likely to be in a short time the sheriff's lady, I broke off my acquaintance with some of my neighbours; and advised my husband to keep good company, and not to be seen with men that were worth nothing.

In time we found that ale disagreed with his constitution, and went every night to drink his pint at a tavern, where he met with a set of critics, who disputed upon the merits of the different theatrical performers. By these idle fellows he was taken to the play, which at first he did not seem much to heed; for he owned, that he very seldom knew what they were doing, and that, while his companions would let him alone, he was commonly thinking on his last bargain.

Having once gone, however, he went again and again, though I often told him that three shillings were thrown away; at last he grew uneasy if he missed a night, and importuned me to go with him. I went to a tragedy which they called *Macbeth;* and, when I came home, told him, that I could not bear to see men and women make themselves such fools, by pretending to be witches and ghosts, generals and kings, and to walk in their sleep when they were as much awake as those that looked at them. He told

me, that I must get higher notions, and that a play was the most rational of all entertainments, and most proper to relax the mind after the business of the day.

By degrees he gained knowledge of some of the players; and when the play was over, very frequently treated them with suppers; for which he was admitted to stand behind the scenes.

He soon began to lose some of his morning hours in the same folly, and was for one winter very diligent in his attendance on the rehearsals; but of this species of idleness he grew weary, and said, that the play was nothing without the company.

His ardour for the diversion of the evening increased; he bought a sword, and paid five shillings a night to sit in the boxes; he went sometimes into a place which he calls the green-room, where all the wits of the age assembled; and, when he had been there, could do nothing for two or three days but repeat their jests, or tell their disputes.

He has now lost his regard for every thing but the play-house: he invites, three times a week, one or other to drink claret, and talk of the drama. His first care in the morning is to read the play-bills; and, if he remembers any lines of the tragedy which is to be represented, walks about the shop, repeating them so loud, and with such strange gestures, that the passengers gather round the door.

His greatest pleasure when I married him was to hear the situation of his shop commended, and to be told how many estates have been got in it by the same trade; but of late he grows peevish at any mention of business, and delights in nothing so much as to be told that he speaks like *Mossop*.

Among his new associates he has learned another language, and speaks in such a strain that his neighbours cannot understand him. If a customer talks

longer than he is willing to hear, he will complain that he has been excruciated with unmeaning verbosity; he laughs at the letters of his friends for their tameness of expression, and often declares himself weary of attending to the *minutiæ* of a shop.

It is well for me that I know how to keep a book, for of late he is scarcely ever in the way. Since one of his friends told him that he had a genius for tragic poetry, he has locked himself in an upper room six or seven hours a day; and, when I carry him any paper to be read or signed, I hear him talking vehemently to himself, sometimes of love and beauty, sometimes of friendship and virtue, but more frequently of liberty and his country.

I would gladly, Mr. *Idler*, be informed what to think of a shopkeeper who is incessantly talking about liberty; a word which, since his acquaintance with polite life, my husband has always in his mouth; he is, on all occasions, afraid of our liberty, and declares his resolution to hazard all for liberty. What can the man mean? I am sure he has liberty enough —it were better for him and me if his liberty was lessened.

He has a friend, whom he calls a critic, that comes twice a week to read what he is writing. This critic tells him that his piece is a little irregular, but that some detached scenes will shine prodigiously, and that in the character of *Bombulus* he is wonderfully great. My scribbler then squeezes his hand, calls him the best of friends, thanks him for sincerity, and tells him that he hates to be flattered. I have reason to believe that he seldom parts with his dear friend without lending him two guineas, and am afraid that he gave bail for him three days ago.

By this course of life our credit as traders is lessened, and I cannot forbear to suspect, that my hus-

band's honour as a wit is not much advanced, for he seems to be always the lowest of the company, and is afraid to tell his opinion till the rest have spoken. When he was behind his counter, he used to be brisk, active, and jocular, like a man that knew what he was doing, and did not fear to look another in the face; but among wits and critics he is timorous and aukward, and hangs down his head at his own table. Dear Mr. *Idler*, persuade him, if you can, to return once more to his native element. Tell him, that his wit will never make him rich, but that there are places where riches will always make a wit.

I am, SIR, &c.

DEBORAH GINGER.

N° 48. SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1759.

THERE is no kind of idleness, by which we are so easily seduced, as that which dignifies itself by the appearance of business, and by making the loiterer imagine that he has something to do which must not be neglected, keeps him in perpetual agitation, and hurries him rapidly from place to place.

He that sits still, or reposes himself upon a couch, no more deceives himself than he deceives others; he knows that he is doing nothing, and has no other solace of his insignificance than the resolution, which the lazy hourly make, of changing his mode of life.

To do nothing every man is ashamed; and to do much almost every man is unwilling or afraid. In-

numerable expedients have therefore been invented to produce motion without labour, and employment without solicitude. The greater part of those whom the kindness of fortune has left to their own direction, and whom want does not keep chained to the counter or the plough, play throughout life with the shadows of business, and know not at last what they have been doing.

These imitators of action are of all denominations. Some are seen at every auction without intention to purchase; others appear punctually at the *Exchange*, though they are known there only by their faces. Some are always making parties to visit collections for which they have no taste; and some neglect every pleasure and every duty to hear questions, in which they have no interest, debated in parliament.

These men never appear more ridiculous than in the distress which they imagine themselves to feel, from some accidental interruption of those empty pursuits. A tiger newly imprisoned is indeed more formidable, but not more angry, than *Jack Tulip* withheld from a florist's feast, or *Tom Distich* hindered from seeing the first representation of a play.

As political affairs are the highest and most extensive of temporal concerns; the mimic of a politician is more busy and important than any other trifler. Monsieur *le Noir*, a man who, without property or importance in any corner of the earth, has, in the present confusion of the world, declared himself a steady adherent to the *French*, is made miserable by a wind that keeps back the packet-boat, and still more miserable by every account of a *Malouin* privateer caught in his cruize; he knows well that nothing can be done or said by him which can produce any effect but that of laughter, that he can neither hasten nor retard good or evil, that his

joys and sorrows have scarcely any partakers; yet such is his zeal, and such his curiosity, that he would run barefooted to *Gravesend*, for the sake of knowing first that the *English* had lost a tender, and would ride out to meet every mail from the continent if he might be permitted to open it.

Learning is generally confessed to be desirable, and there are some who fancy themselves always busy in acquiring it. Of these ambulatory students, one of the most busy is my friend *Tom Restless*.

Tom has long had a mind to be a man of knowledge, but he does not care to spend much time among authors; for he is of opinion that few books deserve the labour of perusal, that they give the mind an unfashionable cast, and destroy that freedom of thought and easiness of manners indispensably requisite to acceptance in the world. *Tom* has therefore found another way to wisdom. When he rises he goes into a coffee-house, where he creeps so near to men whom he takes to be reasoners as to hear their discourse, and endeavours to remember something which, when it has been strained through *Tom*'s head, is so near nothing, that what it once was, cannot be discovered. This he carries round from friend to friend through a circle of visits, till, hearing what each says upon the question, he becomes able at dinner to say a little himself; and, as every great genius relaxes himself among his inferiors, meets with some who wonder how so young a man can talk so wisely.

At night he has a new feast prepared for his intellects; he always runs to a disputing society, or a speaking club, where he half hears what, if he had heard the whole, he would but half understand; goes home pleased with the consciousness of a day well spent, lies down full of ideas, and rises in the morning empty as before.

N° 49. SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1759.

I SUPPED three nights ago with my friend *Will Marvel*. His affairs obliged him lately to take a journey into *Devonshire*, from which he has just returned. He knows me to be a very patient hearer, and was glad of my company, as it gave him an opportunity of disburthening himself by a minute relation of the casualties of his expedition.

Will is not one of those who go out and return with nothing to tell. He has a story of his travels, which will strike a home-bred citizen with horror, and has in ten days suffered so often the extremes of terror and joy, that he is in doubt whether he shall ever again expose either his body or mind to such danger and fatigue.

When he left *London* the morning was bright, and a fair day was promised. But *Will* is born to struggle with difficulties. That happened to him, which has sometimes, perhaps, happened to others. Before he had gone more than ten miles it began to rain. What course was to be taken? His soul disdained to turn back. He did what the king of *Prussia* might have done; he flapped his hat, buttoned up his cape, and went forwards, fortifying his mind by the stoical consolation, that whatever is violent will be short.

His constancy was not long tried; at the distance

of about half a mile he saw an inn, which he entered wet and weary, and found civil treatment and proper refreshment. After a respite of about two hours, he looked abroad, and seeing the sky clear, called for his horse, and passed the first stage without any other memorable accident.

Will considered, that labour must be relieved by pleasure, and that the strength which great undertakings require must be maintained by copious nutriment; he therefore ordered himself an elegant supper, drank two bottles of claret, and passed the beginning of the night in sound sleep; but, waking before light, was forewarned of the troubles of the next day, by a shower beating against his windows with such violence as to threaten the dissolution of nature. When he arose, he found what he expected, that the country was under water. He joined himself, however, to a company that was travelling the same way, and came safely to the place of dinner, though every step of his horse dashed the mud into the air.

In the afternoon, having parted from his company, he set forward alone, and passed many collections of water, of which it was impossible to guess the depth, and which he now cannot review without some censure of his own rashness; but what a man undertakes he must perform, and *Marvel* hates a coward at his heart.

Few that lie warm in their beds think what others undergo, who have perhaps been as tenderly educated, and have as acute sensations as themselves. My friend was now to lodge the second night almost fifty miles from home, in a house which he never had seen before, among people to whom he was totally a stranger, not knowing whether the next man he should meet would prove good or bad; but seeing an inn of a good appearance, he rode resolutely into

the yard; and knowing that respect is often paid in proportion as it is claimed, delivered his injunctions to the hostler with spirit, and entering the house, called vigorously about him.

On the third day up rose the sun and Mr. *Marvel*. His troubles and his dangers were now such as he wishes no other man ever to encounter. The ways were less frequented, and the country more thinly inhabited. He rode many a lonely hour through mire and water, and met not a single soul for two miles together with whom he could exchange a word. He cannot deny that, looking round upon the dreary region, and seeing nothing but bleak fields and naked trees, hills obscured by fogs, and flats covered with inundations, he did for some time suffer melancholy to prevail upon him, and wished himself again safe at home. One comfort he had, which was to consider that none of his friends were in the same distress, for whom, if they had been with him, he should have suffered more than for himself; he could not forbear sometimes to consider how happy the *Idler* is settled in an easier condition, who, surrounded like him with terrors, could have done nothing but lie down and die.

Amidst these reflections he came to a town, and found a dinner which disposed him to more cheerful sentiments; but the joys of life are short, and its miseries are long; he mounted and travelled fifteen miles more through dirt and desolation.

At last the sun set, and all the horrors of darkness came upon him. He then repented the weak indulgence in which he had gratified himself at noon with too long an interval of rest: yet he went forward along a path which he could no longer see, sometimes rushing suddenly into water, and sometimes incumbered with stiff clay, ignorant whither he was

going, and uncertain whether his next step might not be the last.

In this dismal gloom of nocturnal peregrination his horse unexpectedly stood still. *Marvel* had heard many relations of the instinct of horses, and was in doubt what danger might be at hand. Sometimes he fancied that he was on the bank of a river still and deep, and sometimes that a dead body lay across the track. He sat still awhile to recollect his thoughts; and as he was about to alight and explore the darkness, out stepped a man with a lantern, and opened the turnpike. He hired a guide to the town, arrived in safety, and slept in quiet.

The rest of his journey was nothing but danger. He climbed and descended precipices on which vulgar mortals tremble to look; he passed marshes like the *Serbonian bog, where armies whole have sunk;* he forded rivers where the current roared like the *Egre* or the *Severn;* or ventured himself on bridges that trembled under him, from which he looked down on foaming whirlpools, or dreadful abysses; he wandered over houseless heaths, amidst all the rage of the elements, with the snow driving in his face, and the tempest howling in his ears.

Such are the colours in which *Marvel* paints his adventures. He has accustomed himself to sounding words and hyperbolical images, till he has lost the power of true description. In a road through which the heaviest carriages pass without difficulty, and the post-boy every day and night goes and returns, he meets with hardships like those which are endured in *Siberian* deserts, and misses nothing of romantic danger but a giant and a dragon. When his dreadful story is told in proper terms, it is only that the way was dirty in winter, and that he ex-

perienced the common vicissitudes of rain and sunshine.

N° 50. SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 1759.

THE character of Mr. *Marvel* has raised the merriment of some and the contempt of others, who do not sufficiently consider how often they hear and practise the same arts of exaggerated narration.

There is not, perhaps, among the multitudes of all conditions that swarm upon the earth, a single man who does not believe that he has something extraordinary to relate of himself; and who does not, at one time or other, summon the attention of his friends to the casualties of his adventures, and the vicissitudes of his fortune; casualties and vicissitudes that happen alike in lives uniform and diversified; to the commander of armies, and the writer at a desk, to the sailor who resigns himself to the wind and water, and the farmer whose longest journey is to the market.

In the present state of the world men may pass through *Shakspeare's* seven stages of life, and meet nothing singular and wonderful. But such is every man's attention to himself, that what is common and unheeded when it is only seen, becomes remarkable and peculiar when we happen to feel it.

It is well enough known to be according to the usual process of nature that men should sicken and

recover, that some designs should succeed and others miscarry, that friends should be separated and meet again, that some should be made angry by endeavours to please them, and some be pleased when no care has been used to gain their approbation; that men and women should at first come together by chance, like each other so well as to commence acquaintance, improve acquaintance into fondness, increase or extinguish fondness by marriage, and have children of different degrees of intellects and virtue, some of whom die before their parents, and others survive them.

Yet let any man tell his own story, and nothing of all this has ever befallen him according to the common order of things; something has always discriminated his care; some unusual concurrence of events has appeared which made him more happy or more miserable than other mortals! for in pleasures or calamities, however common, every one has comforts and afflictions of his own.

It is certain that without some artificial augmentations, many of the pleasures of life, and almost all its embellishments, would fall to the ground. If no man was to express more delight than he felt, those who felt most would raise little envy. If travellers were to describe the most laboured performances of art with the same coldness as they survey them, all expectations of happiness from change of place would cease. The pictures of *Raphael* would hang without spectators, and the gardens of *Versailles* might be inhabited by hermits. All the pleasure that is received ends in an opportunity of splendid falsehood, in the power of gaining notice by the display of beauties which the eye was weary of beholding, and a history of happy moments, of which, in reality, the most happy was the last.

The ambition of superior sensibility and superior

eloquence disposes the lovers of arts to receive rapture at one time, and communicate it at another; and each labours first to impose upon himself, and then to propagate the imposture.

Pain is less subject than pleasure to caprices of expression. The torments of disease, and the grief for irremediable misfortunes, sometimes are such as no words can declare, and can only be signified by groans, or sobs, or inarticulate ejaculations. Man has from nature a mode of utterance peculiar to pain, but he has none peculiar to pleasure, because he never has pleasure but in such degrees as the ordinary use of language may equal or surpass.

It is nevertheless certain, that many pains as well as pleasures are heightened by rhetorical affectation, and that the picture is, for the most part, bigger than the life.

When we describe our sensations of another's sorrows either in friendly or ceremonious condolence, the customs of the world scarcely admit of rigid veracity. Perhaps the fondest friendship would enrage oftener than comfort, were the tongue on such occasions faithfully to represent the sentiments of the heart; and I think the strictest moralists allow forms of address to be used without much regard to their literal acceptation, when either respect or tenderness requires them, because they are universally known to denote not the degree but the species of our sentiments.

But the same indulgence cannot be allowed to him who aggravates dangers incurred or sorrow endured by himself, because he darkens the prospect of futurity, and multiplies the pains of our condition by useless terror. Those who magnify their delights are less criminal deceivers, yet they raise hopes which are sure to be disappointed.

It would be undoubtedly best, if we could see and hear every thing as it is, that nothing might be too anxiously dreaded, or too ardently pursued.

N° 51. SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1759.

It has been commonly remarked, that eminent men are least eminent at home, that bright characters lose much of their splendor at a nearer view, and many who fill the world with their fame, excite very little reverence among those that surround them in their domestic privacies.

To blame or to suspect is easy and natural. When the fact is evident, and the cause doubtful, some accusation is always engendered between idleness and malignity. This disparity of general and familiar esteem is therefore imputed to hidden vices, and to practices indulged in secret, but carefully covered from the public eye.

Vice will indeed always produce contempt. The dignity of *Alexander*, though nations fell prostrate before him, was certainly held in little veneration by the partakers of his midnight revels, who had seen him, in the madness of wine, murder his friend, or set fire to the *Persian* palace at the instigation of a harlot; and it is well remembered among us, that the avarice of *Marlborough* kept him in subjection to his wife while he was dreaded by *France* as her

conqueror, and honoured by the emperor as his deliverer.

But though, where there is vice there must be want of reverence it is not reciprocally true, that when there is want of reverence there is always vice. That awe which great actions or abilities impress will be inevitably diminished by acquaintance, though nothing either mean or criminal should be found.

Of men, as of every thing else, we must judge according to our knowledge. When we see of a hero only his battles, or of a writer only his books, we have nothing to allay our ideas of their greatness. We consider the one only as the guardian of his country, and the other only as the instructor of mankind. We have neither opportunity nor motive to examine the minuter parts of their lives, or the less apparent peculiarities of their characters; we name them with habitual respect, and forget, what we still continue to know, that they are men like other mortals.

But such is the constitution of the world, that much of life must be spent in the same manner by the wise and the ignorant, the exalted and the low. Men, however distinguished by external accidents or intrinsic qualities, have all the same wants, the same pains, and, as far as the senses are consulted, the same pleasure. The petty cares and petty duties are the same in every station to every understanding, and every hour brings some occasion on which we all sink to the common level. We are all naked till we are dressed, and hungry till we are fed; and the general's triumph, and sage's disputation, end, like the humble labours of the smith or plowman, in a dinner or in sleep.

Those notions which are to be collected by reason, in opposition to the senses, will seldom

stand forward in the mind, but lie treasured in the remoter repositories of memory, to be found only when they are sought. Whatever any man may have written or done, his precepts or his valour will scarcely overbalance the unimportant uniformity which runs through his time. We do not easily consider him as great, whom our own eyes show us to be little; nor labour to keep present to our thoughts the latent excellencies of him who shares with us all our weaknesses and many of our follies; who like us is delighted with slight amusements, busied with trifling employments, and disturbed by little vexations.

Great powers cannot be exerted, but when great exigencies make them necessary. Great exigencies can happen but seldom, and therefore those qualities which have a claim to the veneration of mankind, lie hid, for the most part, like subterranean treasures, over which the foot passes as on common ground, till necessity breaks open the golden cavern.

In the ancient celebration of victory, a slave was placed on the triumphal car, by the side of the general, who reminded him by a short sentence, that he was a man. Whatever danger there might be lest a leader, in his passage to the capitol, should forget the frailties of his nature, there was surely no need of such an admonition; the intoxication could not have continued long; he would have been at home but a few hours before some of his dependants would have forgot his greatness, and shown him, that notwithstanding his laurels, he was yet a man.

There are some who try to escape this domestic degradation, by labouring to appear always wise or always great; but he that strives against nature, will for ever strive in vain. To be grave of mien

and slow of utterance; to look with solicitude and speak with hesitation, is attainable at will; but the show of wisdom is ridiculous when there is nothing to cause doubt, as that of valour where there is nothing to be feared.

A man who has duly considered the condition of his being, will contentedly yield to the course of things; he will not pant for distinction where distinction would imply no merit; but though on great occasions he may wish to be greater than others, he will be satisfied in common occurrences not to be less.

N° 52. SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1759.

Responsare cupidinibus.

HOR.

THE practice of self-denial, or the forbearance of lawful pleasure, has been considered by almost every nation, from the remotest ages, as the highest exaltation of human virtue; and all have agreed to pay respect and veneration to those who abstained from the delights of life, even when they did not censure those who enjoy them.

The general voice of mankind, civil and barbarous, confesses that the mind and body are at variance, and that neither can be made happy by its proper gratifications but at the expense of the other; that a pampered body will darken the mind, and an enlightened mind will macerate the body. And none have failed to confer their esteem on those who prefer intellect to sense, who control their lower by their higher faculties, and forget the wants and desires of animal life for rational disquisitions or pious contemplations.

The earth has scarcely a country so far advanced towards political regularity as to divide the inhabitants into classes, where some orders of men or women are not distinguished by voluntary severities, and where the reputation of their sanctity is not increased in proportion to the rigour of their rules, and the exactness of their performance.

When an opinion to which there is no temptation of interest spreads wide and continues long, it may reasonably be presumed to have been issued by nature or dictated by reason. It has been often observed that the fictions of imposture, and illusions of fancy, soon give way to time and experience; and that nothing keeps its ground but truth, which gains every day new influence by new confirmation.

But truth, when it is reduced to practice, easily becomes subject to caprice and imagination; and many particular acts will be wrong, though their general principle be right. It cannot be denied that a just conviction of the restraint necessary to be laid upon the appetites has produced extravagant and unnatural modes of mortification, and institutions, which, however favourably considered, will be found to violate nature without promoting piety.

But the doctrine of self-denial is not weakened in itself by the errors of those who misinterpret or misapply it; the encroachment of the appetites upon the understanding is hourly perceived; and the state of those, whom sensuality has enslaved, is known to be in the highest degree despicable and wretched.

The dread of such shameful captivity may justly raise alarms, and wisdom will endeavour to keep danger at a distance. By timely caution and suspicious vigilance those desires may be repressed, to which indulgence would soon give absolute dominion; those enemies may be overcome, which, when they have been a while accustomed to victory, can no longer be resisted.

Nothing is more fatal to happiness or virtue, than that confidence which flatters us with an opinion

of our own strength, and by assuring us of the power of retreat, precipitates us into hazard. Some may safely venture farther than others into the regions of delight, lay themselves more open to the golden shafts of pleasure, and advance nearer to the residence of the Syrens; but he that is best armed with constancy and reason is yet vulnerable in one part or other, and to every man there is a point fixed, beyond which, if he passes, he will not easily return. It is certainly most wise, as it is most safe, to stop before he touches the utmost limit, since every step of advance will more and more entice him to go forward, till he shall at last enter into the recesses of voluptuousness, and sloth and despondency close the passage behind him.

To deny early and inflexibly, is the only art of checking the importunity of desire, and of preserving quiet and innocence. Innocent gratifications must be sometimes withheld; he that complies with all lawful desires will certainly lose his empire over himself, and in time either submit his reason to his wishes, and think all his desires lawful, or dismiss his reason as troublesome and intrusive, and resolve to snatch what he may happen to wish, without inquiring about right and wrong.

No man, whose appetites are his masters, can perform the duties of his nature with strictness and regularity; he that would be superior to external influences must first become superior to his own passions.

When the *Roman* general, sitting at supper with a plate of turnips before him, was solicited by large presents to betray his trust, he asked the messengers whether he that could sup on turnips was a man likely to sell his own country. Upon

him who has reduced his senses to obedience, temptation has lost its power; he is able to attend impartially to virtue, and execute her commands without hesitation.

To set the mind above the appetites is the end of abstinence, which one of the Fathers observes to be not a virtue, but the ground-work of virtue. By forbearing to do what may innocently be done, we may add hourly new vigour or resolution, and secure the power of resistance when pleasure or interest shall lend their charms to guilt.

N° 53. SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I HAVE a wife that keeps good company. You know that the word *good* varies its meaning according to the value set upon different qualities in different places. To be a good man in a college, is to be learned; in a camp, to be brave; and in the city, to be rich. By good company in the place which I have the misfortune to inhabit, we understand not always those from whom any good can be learned, whether wisdom or virtue; or by whom any good can be conferred, whether profit or reputation. Good company is the company of those whose birth is

high, and whose riches are great; or of those whom the rich and noble admit to familiarity.

I am a gentleman of fortune by no means exuberant, but more than equal to the wants of my family, and for some years equal to our desires. My wife, who had never been accustomed to splendor, joined her endeavours to mine in the superintendence of our œconomy; we lived in decent plenty, and were not excluded from moderate pleasures.

But slight causes produce great effects. All my happiness, has been destroyed by change of place; virtue is too often merely local; in some situations the air diseases the body, and in others poisons the mind. Being obliged to remove my habitation, I was led by my evil genius to a convenient house in a street where many of the nobility reside. We had scarcely ranged our furniture, and aired our rooms, when my wife began to grow discontented, and to wonder what the neighbours would think when they saw so few chairs and chariots at her door.

Her acquaintance, who came to see her from the quarter that we had left, mortified her without design, by continual inquiries about the ladies whose houses they viewed from our windows. She was ashamed to confess that she had no intercourse with them, and sheltered her distress under general answers, which always tended to raise suspicion that she knew more than she would tell; but she was often reduced to difficulties, when the course of talk introduced questions about the furniture or ornaments of their houses, which, when she could get no intelligence, she was forced to pass slightly over, as things which she saw so often that she never minded them.

To all these vexations she was resolved to put an

end, and redoubled her visits to those few of her friends who visited those who kept good company; and, if ever she met a lady of quality, forced herself into notice by respect and assiduity. Her advances were generally rejected; and she heard them, as they went down stairs, talk how some creatures put themselves forward.

She was not discouraged, but crept forward from one to another; and as perseverance will do great things, sapped her way unperceived, till, unexpectedly, she appeared at the card-table of lady *Biddy Porpoise*, a lethargic virgin, of seventy-six, whom all the families in the next square visited very punctually when she was not at home.

This was the first step of that elevation to which my wife has since ascended. For five months she had no name in her mouth but that of lady *Biddy*, who, let the world say what it would, had a fine understanding, and such a command of her temper, that whether she won or lost, she slept over her cards.

At lady *Biddy*'s she met with lady *Tawdry*, whose favour she gained by estimating her ear-rings, which were counterfeit, at twice the value of real diamonds. When she had once entered two houses of distinction, she was easily admitted into more, and in ten weeks had all her time anticipated by parties and engagements. Every morning she is bespoke, in the summer, for the gardens; in the winter, for a sale; every afternoon she has visits to pay, and every night brings an inviolable appointment, or an assembly in which the best company in the town were to appear.

You will easily imagine that much of my domestic comfort is withdrawn. I never see my wife but in the hurry of preparation, or the languor of

weariness. To dress and to undress is almost her whole business in private, and the servants take advantage of her negligence to increase expense. But I can supply her omission by my own diligence, and should not much regret this new course of life, if it did nothing more than transfer to me the care of our accounts. The changes which it has made are more vexatious. My wife has no longer the use of her understanding. She has no rule of action but the fashion. She has no opinion but that of the people of quality. She has no language but the dialect of her own set of company. She hates and admires in humble imitation; and echoes the words *charming* and *detestable* without consulting her own perceptions.

If for a few minutes we sit down together, she entertains me with the repartees of lady *Cackle*, or the conversation of lord *Whiffler* and Miss *Quick*, and wonders to find me receiving with indifference sayings which put all the company into laughter.

By her old friends she is no longer very willing to be seen, but she must not rid herself of them all at once; and is sometimes surprised by her best visitants in company which she would not show, and cannot hide; but from the moment that a countess enters, she takes care neither to hear nor see them: they soon find themselves neglected, and retire; and she tells her ladyship that they are somehow related at a great distance, and that as they are good sort of people she cannot be rude to them.

As by this ambitious union with those that are above her, she is always forced upon disadvantageous comparisons of her condition with theirs, she has a constant source of misery within; and never

returns from glittering assemblies and magnificent apartments but she growls out her discontent, and wonders why she was doomed to so indigent a state. When she attends the duchess to a sale, she always sees something that she cannot buy; and, that she may not seem wholly insignificant, she will sometimes venture to bid, and often make acquisitions which she did not want, at prices which she cannot afford.

What adds to all this uneasiness is, that this expense is without use, and this vanity without honour; she forsakes houses where she might be courted, for those where she is only suffered; her equals are daily made her enemies, and her superiors will never be her friends.

I am, SIR, yours, &c.

N° 54. SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

You have lately entertained your admirers with the case of an unfortunate husband, and thereby given a demonstrative proof you are not averse even to hear appeals and terminate differences between man and wife; I therefore take the liberty to present you with the case of an injured lady, which, as it chiefly relates to what I think the lawyers call a point of law, I shall do in as juridical a manner as I am capable,

and submit it to the consideration of the learned gentlemen of that profession.

Imprimis. In the style of my marriage articles, a marriage was *had and solemnized*, about six months ago, between me and Mr. *Savecharges*, a gentleman possessed of a plentiful fortune of his own, and one who, I was persuaded, would improve, and not spend, mine.

Before our marriage, Mr. *Savecharges* had all along preferred the salutary exercise of walking on foot to the distempered ease, as he terms it, of lolling in a chariot; but, notwithstanding his fine panegyrics on walking, the great advantages the infantry were in the sole possession of, and the many dreadful dangers they escaped, he found I had very different notions of an equipage, and was not easily to be converted, or gained over to his party.

An equipage I was determined to have, whenever I married. I too well knew the disposition of my intended consort to leave the providing one entirely to his honour, and flatter myself Mr. *Savecharges* has, in the articles made previous to our marriage, *agreed to keep me a coach;* but lest I should be mistaken, or the attorney should not have done me justice in methodizing or legalizing these half dozen words, I will set about and transcribe that part of the agreement, which will explain the matter to you much better than can be done by one who is so deeply interested in the event; and show on what foundation I build my hopes of being soon under the transporting, delightful denomination of a fashionable lady, who enjoys the exalted and much-envied felicity of bowling about in her own coach.

" And further the said *Solomon Savecharges*, for " divers good causes and considerations him here- " unto moving, hath agreed, and doth hereby " agree, that the said *Solomon Savecharges* shall and

" will, so soon as conveniently may be after the so-
" lemnization of the said intended marriage, at his
" own proper cost and charges, find and provide a
" *certain vehicle or four-wheel carriage, commonly*
" *called or known by the name of a coach;* which said
" vehicle or wheel carriage, so called or known by
" the name of a coach, shall be *used and enjoyed* by
" the said *Sukey Modish*, his intended wife," [pray mind that, Mr. *Idler*], " at such times and in such
" manner as she the said *Sukey Modish* shall think
" fit and convenient."

Such, Mr. *Idler*, is the agreement my *passionate admirer* entered into; and what the *dear frugal husband* calls a performance of it remains to be described. Soon after the ceremony of signing and sealing was over, our wedding-clothes being sent home, and, in short, every thing in readiness except the coach, my own shadow was scarcely more constant than my passionate lover in his attendance on me: wearied by his perpetual importunities for what he called a completion of his bliss, I consented to make him happy; in a few days I gave him my hand, and, attended by *Hymen* in his saffron robes, retired to a country-seat of my husband's, where the honey-moon flew over our heads ere we had time to recollect ourselves, or think of our engagements in town. Well, to town we came, and you may be sure, Sir, I expected to step into my coach on my arrival here: but what was my surprise and disappointment, when, instead of this, he began to sound in my ears, " That the interest of money was low, very low; and what a terrible thing it was to be incumbered with a little regiment of servants in these hard times!" I could easily perceive what all this tended to, but would not seem to understand him; which made it highly necessary for Mr. *Savecharges* to explain himself more intelligibly; to harp

upon and protest he dreaded the expense of keeping a coach. And truly, for his part, he could not conceive how the pleasure resulting from such a convenience could be any way adequate to the heavy expense attending it. I now thought it high time to speak with equal plainness, and told him, as the fortune I brought, fairly entitled me to ride in my own coach, and as I was sensible his circumstances would very well afford it, he must pardon me if I insisted on a performance of his agreement.

I appeal to you, Mr. *Idler*, whether any thing could be more civil, more complaisant, than this? And, would you believe it, the creature in return, a few days after, accosted me, in an offended tone, with, "Madam, I can now tell you your coach is "ready; and since you are so passionately fond of "one, I intend you the honour of keeping a pair of "horses.—You insisted upon having an article of "pin-money, and horses are no part of my agree-"ment." Base, designing wretch!—I beg your pardon, Mr. *Idler*, the very recital of such mean, ungentleman-like behaviour fires my blood, and lights up a flame within me. But hence thou worst of monsters, ill-timed Rage, and let me not spoil my cause for want of temper.

Now, though I am convinced I might make a worse use of part of my pin-money, than by extending my bounty towards the support of so useful a part of the brute creation; yet, like a true-born Englishwoman, I am so tenacious of my rights and privileges, and moreover so good a friend to the gentlemen of the law, that I protest, Mr. *Idler*, sooner than tamely give up the point, and be quibbled out of my right, I will receive my pin-money, as it were with one hand, and pay it to them with the other; provided they will give me, or, which is the same thing, my trustees, encouragement

to commence a suit against this dear, frugal husband of mine.

And of this I can't have the least shadow of doubt, inasmuch as I have been told by very good authority, it is some way or other laid down as a rule, "*That "*whenever* the law doth give any thing to one, it "giveth impliedly whatever is necessary for the "taking and enjoying the same." Now, I would gladly know what enjoyment I, or any lady in the kingdom, can have of a coach without horses? The answer is obvious—None at all! For as Serj. *Catlyne* very wisely observes, "Though a coach has wheels, "to the end it may thereby and by virtue thereof "be enabled to move; yet in point of utility it may "as well have none, if they are not put in motion "by means of its vital parts, that is, the horses."

And therefore, Sir, I humbly hope you and the learned in the law will be of opinion, that two certain animals, or quadruped creatures, commonly called or known by the name of horses, ought to be annexed to, and go along with the coach.

SUKEY SAVECHARGES.

N° 55. SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1759.

MR. IDLER;

I HAVE taken the liberty of laying before you my complaint, and of desiring advice or consolation

* Coke on Lyttelton.

with the greater confidence, because I believe many other writers have suffered the same indignities with myself, and hope my quarrel will be regarded by you and your readers as the common cause of literature.

Having been long a student, I thought myself qualified in time to become an author. My inquiries have been much diversified and far extended, and not finding my genius directing me by irresistible impulse to any particular subject, I deliberated three years which part of knowledge to illustrate by my labours. Choice is more often determined by accident than by reason: I walked abroad one morning with a curious lady, and by her inquiries and observations was incited to write the natural history of the county in which I reside.

Natural history is no work for one that loves his chair or his bed. Speculation may be pursued on a soft couch, but Nature must be observed in the open air. I have collected materials with indefatigable pertinacity. I have gathered glow-worms in the evening, and snails in the morning; I have seen the daisy close and open; I have heard the owl shriek at midnight, and hunted insects in the heat of noon.

Seven years I was employed in collecting animals and vegetables, and then found that my design was yet imperfect. The subterranean treasures of the place had been passed unobserved, and another year was to be spent in mines and coal-pits. What I had already done supplied a sufficient motive to do more. I acquainted myself with the black inhabitants of metallic caverns, and, in defiance of damps and floods, wandered through the gloomy labyrinths, and gathered fossils from every fissure.

At last I began to write, and as I finished any section of my book, read it to such of my friends as were most skilful in the matter which it treated. None of

them were satisfied; one disliked the disposition of the parts, another the colours of the style; one advised me to enlarge, another to abridge. I resolved to read no more, but to take my own way and write on, for by consultation I only perplexed my thoughts and retarded my work.

The book was at last finished, and I did not doubt but my labour would be repaid by profit, and my ambition satisfied with honours. I considered that natural history is neither temporary nor local, and that though I limited my inquiries to my own country, yet every part of the earth has productions common to all the rest. Civil history may be partially studied, the revolutions of one nation may be neglected by another; but after that in which all have an interest, all must be inquisitive. No man can have sunk so far into stupidity as not to consider the properties of the ground on which he walks, of the plants on which he feeds, or the animals that delight his ear, or amuse his eye; and therefore I computed that universal curiosity would call for many editions of my book, and that in five years I should gain fifteen thousand pounds by the sale of thirty thousand copies.

When I began to write, I insured the house; and suffered the utmost solicitude when I entrusted my book to the carrier, though I had secured it against mischances by lodging two transcripts in different places. At my arrival, I expected that the patrons of learning would contend for the honour of a dedication, and resolved to maintain the dignity of letters by a haughty contempt of pecuniary solicitations.

I took lodgings near the house of the Royal Society, and expected every morning a visit from the president. I walked in the Park, and wondered that I overheard

no mention of the great naturalist. At last I visited a noble earl, and told him of my work: he answered, that he was under an engagement never to subscribe. I was angry to have that refused which I did not mean to ask, and concealed my design of making him immortal. I went next day to another, and, in resentment of my late affront, offered to prefix his name to my new book. He said, coldly, that *he did not understand those things;* another thought *there were too many books;* and another would *talk with me when the races were over.*

Being amazed to find a man of learning so indecently slighted, I resolved to indulge the philosophical pride of retirement and independence. I then sent to some of the principal booksellers the plan of my book, and bespoke a large room in the next tavern, that I might more commodiously see them together, and enjoy the contest, while they were outbidding one another. I drank my coffee, and yet nobody was come; at last I received a note from one, to tell me that he was going out of town; and from another, that natural history was out of his way. At last there came a grave man, who desired to see the work, and, without opening it, told me, that a book of that size *would never do.*

I then condescended to step into shops, and mention my work to the masters. Some never dealt with authors; others had their hands full; some never had known such a dead time; others had lost by all that they had published for the last twelvemonth. One offered to print my work, if I could procure subscriptions for five hundred, and would allow me two hundred copies for my property. I lost my patience, and gave him a kick; for which he has indicted me.

I can easily perceive that there is a combination among them to defeat my expectations; and I find it so general, that I am sure it must have been long concerted. I suppose some of my friends, to whom I read the first part, gave notice of my design, and perhaps, sold the treacherous intelligence at a higher price than the fraudulence of trade will now allow me for my book.

Inform me, Mr. *Idler*, what I must do; where must knowledge and industry find their recompence, thus neglected by the high, and cheated by the low! I sometimes resolve to print my book at my own expense, and, like the Sibyl, double the price; and sometimes am tempted, in emulation of *Raleigh*, to throw it into the fire, and leave this sordid generation to the curses of posterity. Tell me, dear *Idler*, what I shall do.

I am, Sir, &c.

Nº 56. SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1759.

There is such difference between the pursuits of men, that one part of the inhabitants of a great city lives to little other purpose than to wonder at the rest. Some have hopes and fears, wishes and aversions, which never enter into the thoughts of others, and inquiry is laboriously exerted to gain that which those who possess it are ready to throw away.

To those who are accustomed to value every thing by its use, and have no such superfluity of time or money as may prompt them to unnatural wants or

capricious emulations, nothing appears more improbable or extravagant than the love of curiosities, or that desire of accumulating trifles, which distinguishes many by whom no other distinction could have ever been obtained.

He that has lived without knowing to what height desire may be raised by vanity, with what rapture baubles are snatched out of the hands of rival collectors, how the eagerness of one raises eagerness in another, and one worthless purchase makes a second necessary, may, by passing a few hours at an auction, learn more than can be shown by many volumes of maxims or essays.

The advertisement of a sale is a signal which at once puts a thousand hearts in motion, and brings contenders from every part to the scene of distribution. He that had resolved to buy no more, feels his constancy subdued; there is now something in the catalogue which completes his cabinet, and which he was never before able to find. He whose sober reflections inform him, that of adding collection to collection there is no end, and that it is wise to leave early that which must be left imperfect at last, yet cannot withhold himself from coming to see what it is that brings so many together, and when he comes is soon overpowered by his habitual passion; he is attracted by rarity, seduced by example, and inflamed by competition.

While the stores of pride and happiness are surveyed, one looks with longing eyes and gloomy countenance on that which he despairs to gain from a rich bidder; another keeps his eye with care from settling too long on that which he most earnestly desires; and another, with more art than virtue, depreciates that which he values most, in hope to have it at an easy rate.

The novice is often surprised to see what minute and unimportant discriminations increase or diminish value. An irregular contortion of a turbinated shell, which common eyes pass unregarded, will ten times treble its price in the imagination of philosophers. Beauty is far from operating upon collectors as upon low and vulgar minds, even where beauty might be thought the only quality that could deserve notice. Among the shells that please by their variety of colours, if one can be found accidentally deformed by a cloudy spot, it is boasted as the pride of the collection. China is sometimes purchased for little less than its weight in gold, only because it is old, though neither less brittle, nor better painted than the modern; and brown china is caught up with ecstasy, though no reason can be imagined for which it should be preferred to common vessels of common clay.

The fate of prints and coins is equally inexplicable. Some prints are treasured up as inestimably valuable, because the impression was made before the plate was finished. Of coins the price rises not from the purity of the metal, the excellence of the workmanship, the elegance of the legend, or the chronological use. A piece, of which neither the inscription can be read, nor the face distinguished, if there remain of it but enough to show that it is rare, will be sought by contending nations, and dignify the treasury in which it shall be shown.

Whether this curiosity, so barren of immediate advantage, and so liable to depravation, does more harm or good, is not easily decided. Its harm is apparent at the first view. It fills the mind with trifling ambition; fixes the attention upon things which have seldom any tendency towards virtue or wisdom; employs in idle inquiries the time that is given for better purposes; and often ends in mean

and dishonest practices, when desire increases by indulgence beyond the power of honest gratification.

These are the effects of curiosity in excess; but what passion in excess will not become vicious? All indifferent qualities and practices are bad if they are compared with those which are good, and good if they are opposed to those that are bad. The pride or the pleasure of making collections, if it be restrained by prudence and morality, produces a pleasing remission after more laborious studies; furnishes an amusement not wholly unprofitable for that part of life, the greater part of many lives, which would otherwise be lost in idleness or vice; it produces a useful traffic between the industry of indigence and the curiosity of wealth; it brings many things to notice that would be neglected, and, by fixing the thoughts upon intellectual pleasures, resists the natural encroachments of sensuality, and maintains the mind in her lawful superiority.

N° 57. SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1759.

Prudence is of more frequent use than any other intellectual quality; it is exerted on slight occasions, and called into act by the cursory business of common life.

Whatever is universally necessary, has been granted to mankind on easy terms. Prudence, as it is always wanted, is without great difficulty obtained. It requires neither extensive view nor profound search, but forces itself, by spontaneous impulse, upon a mind

neither great nor busy, neither engrossed by vast designs, nor distracted by multiplicity of attention.

Prudence operates on life in the same manner as rules on composition: it produces vigilance rather than elevation; rather prevents loss than procures advantage; and often escapes miscarriages, but seldom reaches either power or honour. It quenches that ardour of enterprise by which every thing is done that can claim praise or admiration; and represses that generous temerity which often fails and often succeeds. Rules may obviate faults, but can never confer beauties; and prudence keeps life safe, but does not often make it happy. The world is not amazed with prodigies of excellence, but when wit tramples upon rules, and magnanimity breaks the chains of prudence.

One of the most prudent of all that have fallen within my observation, is my old companion *Sophron*, who has passed through the world in quiet, by perpetual adherence to a few plain maxims, and wonders how contention and distress can so often happen.

The first principle of *Sophron* is to *run no hazards*. Though he loves money, he is of opinion that frugality is a more certain source of riches than industry. It is to no purpose that any prospect of large profit is set before him; he believes little about futurity, and does not love to trust his money out of his sight, for nobody knows what may happen. He has a small estate, which he lets at the old rent, because *it is better to have a little than nothing;* but he rigorously demands payment on the stated day, for *he that cannot pay one quarter, cannot pay two.* If he is told of any improvements in agriculture, he likes the old way, has observed that changes very seldom answer expectation; is of opinion that our forefathers knew how to till the ground as well as we; and concludes with an argument that nothing can overpower, that the

expense of planting and fencing is immediate, and the advantage distant, and that *he is no wise man who will quit a certainty for an uncertainty.*

Another of *Sophron*'s rules is *to mind no business but his own.* In the state he is of no party; but hears and speaks of public affairs with the same coldness as of the administration of some ancient republic. If any flagrant act of fraud or oppression is mentioned, he hopes that *all is not true that is told:* if misconduct or corruption puts the nation in a flame, he hopes that *every man means well.* At elections he leaves his dependants to their own choice, and declines to vote himself, for every candidate is a good man, whom he is unwilling to oppose or offend.

If disputes happen among his neighbours, he observes an invariable and cold neutrality. His punctuality has gained him the reputation of honesty, and his caution that of wisdom; and few would refuse to refer their claims to his award. He might have prevented many expensive law-suits, and quenched many a feud in its first smoke; but always refuses the office of arbitration, because he must decide against one or the other.

With the affairs of other families he is always unacquainted. He sees estates bought and sold, squandered and increased, without praising the economist, or censuring the spendthrift. He never courts the rising lest they should fall; nor insults the fallen lest they should rise again. His caution has the appearance of virtue, and all who do not want his help praise his benevolence; but, if any man solicits his assistance, he has just sent away all his money; and, when the petitioner is gone, declares to his family that he is sorry for his misfortunes, has always looked upon him with particular kindness, and therefore could not lend him money,

lest he should destroy their friendship by the necessity of enforcing payment.

Of domestic misfortunes he has never heard. When he is told the hundredth time of a gentleman's daughter who has married the coachman, he lifts up his hands with astonishment, for he always thought her a very sober girl. When nuptial quarrels, after having filled the country with talk and laughter, at last end in separation, he never can conceive how it happened, for he looked upon them as a happy couple.

If his advice is asked, he never gives any particular direction, because events are uncertain, and he will bring no blame upon himself; but he takes the consulter tenderly by the hand, tells him he makes his case his own, and advises him not to act rashly, but to weigh the reasons on both sides; observes, that a man may be as easily too hasty as too slow, and that as many fail by doing too much as too little; that *a wise man has two ears and one tongue;* and *that little said is soon mended;* that he could tell him this and that, but that after all every man is the best judge of his own affairs.

With this some are satisfied, and go home with great reverence of *Sophron*'s wisdom; and none are offended, because every one is left in full possession of his own opinion.

Sophron gives no characters. It is equally vain to tell him of vice and virtue; for he has remarked, that no man likes to be censured, and that very few are delighted with the praises of another. He has a few terms which he uses to all alike. With respect to fortune, he believes every family to be in good circumstances; he never exalts any understanding by lavish praise, yet he meets with none but very sensible people. Every man is honest and hearty; and every woman is a good creature.

Thus *Sophron* creeps along, neither loved nor hated, neither favoured nor opposed: he has never attempted to grow rich, for fear of growing poor; and has raised no friends, for fear of making enemies.

N° 58. SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1759.

Pleasure is very seldom found where it is sought. Our brightest blazes of gladness are commonly kindled by unexpected sparks. The flowers which scatter their odours from time to time in the paths of life, grow up without culture from seeds scattered by chance.

Nothing is more hopeless than a scheme of merriment. Wits and humourists are brought together from distant quarters by preconcerted invitations; they come attended by their admirers, prepared to laugh and to applaud; they gaze a-while on each other, ashamed to be silent, and afraid to speak; every man is discontented with himself, grows angry with those that give him pain, and resolves that he will contribute nothing to the merriment of such worthless company. Wine inflames the general malignity, and changes sullenness to petulance till at last none can bear any longer the presence of the rest. They retire to vent their indignation in safer places, where they are heard with attention; their importance is restored, they recover their good humour, and gladden the night with wit and jocularity.

Merriment is always the effect of a sudden impression. The jest which is expected is already destroyed. The most active imagination will be some-

times torpid under the frigid influence of melancholy, and sometimes occasions will be wanting to tempt the mind, however volatile, to sallies and excursions. Nothing was ever said with uncommon felicity, but by the co-operation of chance, and, therefore, wit as well as valour must be content to share its honours with fortune.

All other pleasures are equally uncertain; the general remedy of uneasiness is change of place; almost every one has some journey of pleasure in his mind, with which he flatters his expectation. He that travels in theory has no inconvenience; he has shade and sunshine at his disposal, and wherever he alights finds tables of plenty and looks of gaiety. These ideas are indulged till the day of departure arrives, the chaise is called, and the progress of happiness begins.

A few miles teach him the fallacies of imagination. The road is dusty, the air is sultry, the horses are sluggish and the postillion brutal. He longs for the time of dinner, that he may eat and rest. The inn is crowded, his orders are neglected, and nothing remains but that he devour in haste what the cook has spoiled, and drive on in quest of better entertainment. He finds at night a more commodious house, but the best is always worse than he expected.

He at last enters his native province, and resolves to feast his mind with the conversation of his old friends, and the recollection of juvenile frolics. He stops at the house of his friend, whom he designs to overpower with pleasure by the unexpected interview. He is not known till he tells his name, and revives the memory of himself by a gradual explanation. He is then coldly received and ceremoniously feasted. He hastes away to another, whom his affairs have called to a distant place, and

having seen the empty house, goes away disgusted, by a disappointment which could not be intended because it could not be foreseen. At the next house he finds every face clouded with misfortune, and is regarded with malevolence as an unreasonable intruder, who comes not to visit but to insult them.

It is seldom that we find either men or places such as we expect them. He that has pictured a prospect upon his fancy, will receive little pleasure from his eyes; he that has anticipated the conversation of a wit, will wonder to what prejudice he owes his reputation. Yet it is necessary to hope, though hope should always be deluded; for hope itself is happiness, and its frustrations, however frequent, are yet less dreadful than its extinction.

N° 59. SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1759.

In the common enjoyments of life, we cannot very liberally indulge the present hour, but by anticipating part of the pleasure which might have relieved the tediousness of another day; and any uncommon exertion of strength, or perseverance in labour, is succeeded by a long interval of languor and weariness. Whatever advantage we snatch beyond the certain portion allotted us by nature, is like money spent before it is due, which at the time of regular payment will be missed and regretted.

Fame, like all other things which are supposed to give or to increase happiness, is dispensed with the same equality of distribution. He that is loudly

praised will be clamorously censured; he that rises hastily into fame will be in danger of sinking suddenly into oblivion.

Of many writers who filled their age with wonder, and whose names we find celebrated in the books of their contemporaries, the works are now no longer to be seen, or are seen only amidst the lumber of libraries which are seldom visited, where they lie only to show the deceitfulness of hope, and the uncertainty of honour.

Of the decline of reputation many causes may be assigned. It is commonly lost because it never was deserved; and was conferred at first, not by the suffrage of criticism, but by the fondness of friendship, or servility of flattery. The great and popular are very freely applauded; but all soon grow weary of echoing to each other a name which has no other claim to notice, but that many mouths are pronouncing it at once.

But many have lost the final reward of their labours because they were too hasty to enjoy it. They have laid hold on recent occurrences, and eminent names, and delighted their readers with allusions and remarks, in which all were interested, and to which all therefore were attentive. But the effect ceased with its cause; the time quickly came when new events drove the former from memory, when the vicissitudes of the world brought new hopes and fears, transferred the love and hatred of the public to other agents, and the writer, whose works were no longer assisted by gratitude or resentment, was left to the cold regard of idle curiosity.

He that writes upon general principles, or delivers universal truths, may hope to be often read, because his work will be equally useful at all times, and in every country; but he cannot expect it to be received with eagerness, or to spread with

rapidity, because desire can have no particular stimulation; that which is to be loved long must be loved with reason rather than with passion. He that lays out his labours upon temporary subjects, easily finds readers, and quickly loses them; for what should make the book valued when its subject is no more?

These observations will show the reason why the poem of *Hudibras* is almost forgotten, however embellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions, however bright with wit, and however solid with truth. The hypocrisy which is detected, and the folly which it ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice. Those who had felt the mischief of discord, and the tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture, for every line brought back to memory something known, and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book which was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies of the gay and the witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those that affect to mention it, is seldom read. So vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics, so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false.

N° 60. SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1759.

Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be obtained is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a Critic.

I hope it will give comfort to great numbers who are passing through the world in obscurity, when I inform them how easily distinction may be obtained. All the other powers of literature are coy and haughty, they must be long courted, and at last are not always gained; but Criticism is a goddess easy of access and forward of advance; who will meet the slow, and encourage the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words, and the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity.

This profession has one recommendation peculiar to itself, that it gives vent to malignity without real mischief. No genius was ever blasted by the breath of critics. The poison which, if confined, would have burst the heart, fumes away in empty hisses, and malice is set at ease with very little danger to merit. The critic is the only man whose triumph is without another's pain, and whose greatness does not rise upon another's ruin.

To a study at once so easy and so reputable, so malicious and so harmless, it cannot be necessary to invite my readers by a long or laboured exhortation; it is sufficient, since all would be Critics if they could, to show by one eminent example that all can be Critics if they will.

Dick Minim, after the common course of puerile studies, in which he was no great proficient, was put an apprentice to a brewer, with whom he had lived two years, when his uncle died in the city, and left him a large fortune in the stocks. *Dick* had for six months before used the company of the lower players, of whom he had learned to scorn a trade, and, being now at liberty to follow his genius, he resolved to be a man of wit and humour. That he might be properly initiated in his new character, he frequented the coffee-houses near the theatres, where he listened very diligently, day after day, to those who talked of language and sentiments, and unities and catastrophes, till by slow degrees he began to think that he understood something of the stage, and hoped in time to talk himself.

But he did not trust so much to natural sagacity as wholly to neglect the help of books. When the theatres were shut, he retired to *Richmond* with a few select writers, whose opinions he impressed upon his memory by unwearied diligence; and, when he returned with other wits to the town, was able to tell, in very proper phrases, that the chief business of art is to follow nature; that a perfect writer is not to be expected, because genius decays as judgment increases; that the great art is the art of blotting; and that, according to the rule of *Horace*, every piece should be kept nine years.

Of the great authors he now began to display the characters, laying down as a universal position, that

all had beauties and defects. His opinion was, that *Shakspeare*, committing himself wholly to the impulse of nature, wanted that correctness which learning would have given him; and that *Johnson*, trusting to learning, did not sufficiently cast his eye on nature. He blamed the *stanza* of *Spenser*, and could not bear the *hexameters* of *Sidney*. *Denham* and *Waller* he held the first reformers of *English* numbers; and thought that if *Waller* could have obtained the strength of *Denham*, or *Denham* the sweetness of *Waller*, there had been nothing wanting to complete a poet. He often expressed his commiseration of *Dryden*'s poverty, and his indignation at the age which suffered him to write for bread; he repeated with rapture the first lines of *All for Love*, but wondered at the corruption of taste which could bear any thing so unnatural as rhyming tragedies. In *Otway* he found uncommon powers of moving the passions, but was disgusted by his general negligence, and blamed him for making a conspirator his hero; and never concluded his disquisition without remarking how happily the sound of the clock is made to alarm the audience *Southern* would have been his favourite, but that he mixes comic with tragic scenes, intercepts the natural course of the passions, and fills the mind with a wild confusion of mirth and melancholy. The versification of *Rowe* he thought too melodious for the stage, and too little varied in different passions. He made it the great fault of *Congreve*, that all his persons were wits, and that he always wrote with more art than nature. He considered *Cato* rather as a poem than a play, and allowed *Addison* to be the complete master of allegory and grave humour, but paid no great deference to him as a critic. He thought the chief merit of *Prior* was in his easy tales, and lighter poems though he allowed that his *Solomon* had many

noble sentiments elegantly expressed. In *Swift* he discovered an inimitable vein of irony, and an easiness which all would hope and few would attain. *Pope* he was inclined to degrade from a poet to a versifier, and thought his numbers rather luscious than sweet. He often lamented the neglect of *Phædra* and *Hippolitus*, and wished to see the stage under better regulations.

These assertions passed commonly uncontradicted; and if now and then an opponent started up, he was quickly repressed by the suffrages of the company, and *Minim* went away from every dispute with elation of heart and increase of confidence.

He now grew conscious of his abilities, and began to talk of the present state of dramatic poetry; wondered what was become of the comic genius which supplied our ancestors with wit and pleasantry, and why no writer could be found that durst now venture beyond a farce. He saw no reason for thinking that the vein of humour was exhausted, since we live in a country where liberty suffers every character to spread itself to its utmost bulk, and which, therefore, produces more originals than all the rest of the world together. Of tragedy he concluded business to be the soul, and yet often hinted that love predominates too much upon the modern stage.

He was now an acknowledged critic, and had his own seat in a coffee-house, and headed a party in the pit. *Minim* has more vanity than ill-nature, and seldom desires to do much mischief; he will, perhaps, murmur a little in the ear of him that sits next him, but endeavours to influence the audience to favour, by clapping when an actor exclaims, *Ye gods!* or laments the misery of his country.

By degrees he was admitted to rehearsals; and many of his friends are of opinion, that our present

poets are indebted to him for their happiest thoughts; by his contrivance the bell was rung twice in *Barbarossa*, and by his persuasion the author of *Cleone* concluded his play with a couplet; for what can be more absurd, said *Minim*, than that part of a play should be rhymed, and part written in blank verse? and by what acquisition of faculties is the speaker, who never could find rhymes before, enabled to rhyme at the conclusion of an act?

He is the great investigator of hidden beauties, and is particularly delighted when he finds *the sound an echo to the sense.* He has read all our poets with particular attention to this delicacy of versification, and wonders at the supineness with which their works have been hitherto perused, so that no man has found the sound of a drum in this distich:

> "When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
> "Was beat with fist instead of a stick;"

and that the wonderful lines upon honour and a bubble, have hitherto passed without notice:

> "Honour is like the glassy bubble,
> "Which costs philosophers such trouble;
> "Where, one part crack'd, the whole does fly,
> "And wits are crack'd to find out why."

In these verses, says *Minim*, we have two striking accommodations of the sound to the sense. It is impossible to utter the two lines emphatically without an act like that which they describe; *bubble* and *trouble* causing a momentary inflation of the cheeks by the retention of the breath, which is afterwards forcibly emitted, as in the practice of *blowing bubbles.* But the greatest excellence is in the third line, which is *crack'd* in the middle to express a crack,

and then shivers into monosyllables. Yet hath this diamond lain neglected with common stones, and among the innumerable admirers of *Hudibras* the observation of this superlative passage has been reserved for the sagacity of *Minim*.

N° 61. SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1759.

Mr. *Minim* had now advanced himself to the zenith of critical reputation; when he was in the pit every eye in the boxes was fixed upon him; when he entered his coffee-house, he was surrounded by circles of candidates, who passed their noviciate of literature under his tuition: his opinion was asked by all who had no opinion of their own, and yet loved to debate and decide; and no composition was supposed to pass in safety to posterity, till it had been secured by *Minim*'s approbation.

Minim professes great admiration of the wisdom and munificence by which the academies of the continent were raised; and often wishes for some standard of taste, for some tribunal, to which merit may appeal from caprice, prejudice and malignity. He has formed a plan for an academy of criticism, where every work of imagination may be read before it is printed, and which shall authoritatively direct the theatres what pieces to receive or reject, to exclude or to revive.

Such an institution would, in *Dick*'s opinion, spread the fame of *English* literature over *Europe*, and make *London* the metropolis of elegance and

politeness, the place to which the learned and ingenious of all countries would repair for instruction and improvement, and where nothing would any longer be applauded or endured that was not conformed to the nicest rules, and finished with the highest elegance.

Till some happy conjunction of the planets shall dispose our princes or ministers to make themselves immortal by such an academy, *Minim* contents himself to preside four nights in a week in a critical society selected by himself, where he is heard without contradiction, and whence his judgment is disseminated through the great vulgar and the small.

When he is placed in the chair of criticism, he declares loudly for the noble simplicity of our ancestors, in opposition to the petty refinements, and ornamental luxuriance. Sometimes he is sunk in despair, and perceives false delicacy daily gaining ground, and sometimes brightens his countenance with a gleam of hope, and predicts the revival of the true sublime. He then fulminates his loudest censures against the monkish barbarity of rhyme; wonders how beings that pretend to reason can be pleased with one line always ending like another; tells how unjustly and unnaturally sense is sacrificed to sound; how often the best thoughts are mangled by the necessity of confining or extending them to the dimensions of a couplet; and rejoices that genius has, in our days, shaken off the shackles which had encumbered it so long. Yet he allows that rhyme may sometimes be borne, if the lines be often broken, and the pauses judiciously diversified.

From blank verse he makes an easy transition to *Milton*, whom he produces as an example of the slow advance of lasting reputation. *Milton* is the only writer in whose books *Minim* can read for ever without weariness. What cause is it that exempts this pleasure

from satiety he has long and diligently inquired, and believes it to consist in the perpetual variation of the numbers, by which the ear is gratified and the attention awakened. The lines that are commonly thought rugged and unmusical, he conceives to have been written to temper the melodious luxury of the rest, or to express things by a proper cadence: for he scarcely finds a verse that has not this favourite beauty; he declares that he could shiver in a hot-house when he reads that

> " the ground
> " Burns frore, and cold performs the effect of fire;

and that, when *Milton* bewails his blindness, the verse,

> " So thick a drop serene has quenoh'd these orbs,"

has, he knows not how, something that strikes him with an obscure sensation like that which he fancies would be felt from the sound of darkness.

Minim is not so confident of his rules of judgment as not very eagerly to catch new light from the name of the author. He is commonly so prudent as to spare those whom he cannot resist, unless, as will sometimes happen, he finds the public combined against them. But a fresh pretender to fame he is strongly inclined to censure, till his own honour requires that he commend him. Till he knows the success of a composition, he intrenches himself in general terms; there are some new thoughts and beautiful passages, but there is likewise much which he would have advised the author to expunge. He has several favourite epithets, of which he has never settled the meaning, but which are very commodiously applied to books which he has not read, or

cannot understand. One is *manly*, another is *dry*, another *stiff*, and another *flimsy:* sometimes he discovers delicacy of style, and sometimes meets with *strange expressions.*

He is never so great, or so happy, as when a youth of promising parts is brought to receive his directions for the prosecution of his studies. He then puts on a very serious air; he advises the pupil to read none but the best authors, and, when he finds one congenial to his own mind, to study his beauties, but avoid his faults, and, when he sits down to write, to consider how his favourite author would think at the present time on the present occasion. He exhorts him to catch those moments when he finds his thoughts expanded and his genius exalted, but to take care lest imagination hurry him beyond the bounds of nature. He holds diligence the mother of success; yet enjoins him with great earnestness, not to read more than he can digest, and not to confuse his mind, by pursuing studies of contrary tendencies. He tells him, that every man has his genius, and that *Cicero* could never be a poet. The boy retires illuminated, resolves to follow his genius, and to think how *Milton* would have thought: and *Minim* feasts upon his own beneficence till another day brings another pupil.

N° 62. SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

An opinion prevails almost universally in the world, that he who has money has every thing. This is not a modern paradox, or the tenet of a small and obscure sect, but a persuasion which appears to have operated upon most minds in all ages, and which is supported by authorities so numerous and so cogent, that nothing but long experience could have given me confidence to question its truth.

But experience is the test by which all the philosophers of the present age agree, that speculation must be tried; and I may therefore be allowed to doubt the power of money, since I have been a long time rich, and I have not yet found that riches can make me happy.

My father was a farmer neither wealthy nor indigent, who gave me a better education than was suitable to my birth, because my uncle in the city designed me for his heir, and desired that I might be bred a gentleman. My uncle's wealth was the perpetual subject of conversation in the house; and when any little misfortune befel us, or any mortification dejected us, my father always exhorted me to hold up my head, for my uncle would never marry.

My uncle, indeed, kept his promise. Having his mind completely busied between his warehouse and the change, he felt no tediousness of life, nor

any want of domestic amusements. When my father died, he received me kindly; but, after a few months, finding no great pleasure in the conversation of each other, we parted; and he remitted me a small annuity, on which I lived a quiet and studious life, without any wish to grow great by the death of my benefactor.

But though I never suffered any malignant impatience to take hold on my mind, I could not forbear sometimes to imagine to myself the pleasure of being rich; and, when I read of diversions and magnificence, resolved to try, when time should put the trial in my power, what pleasure they could afford.

My uncle, in the latter spring of his life, when his ruddy cheek and his firm nerves promised him a long and healthy age, died of an apoplexy. His death gave me neither joy nor sorrow. He did me good, and I regarded him with gratitude; but I could not please him, and therefore could not love him.

He had the policy of little minds, who love to surprise; and having always represented his fortune as less than it was, had, I suppose, often gratified himself with thinking, how I should be delighted to find myself twice as rich as I expected. My wealth was such as exceeded all the schemes of expense which I had formed; and I soon began to expand my thoughts, and look round for some purchase of felicity.

The most striking effect of riches is the splendor of dress, which every man has observed to enforce respect, and facilitate reception; and my first desire was to be fine. I sent for a taylor who was employed by the nobility, and ordered such a suit of clothes as I had often looked on with involuntary

submission, and am ashamed to remember with what flutters of expectation I waited for the hour when I should issue forth in all the splendor of embroidery. The clothes were brought, and for three days I observed many eyes turned towards me as I passed; but I felt myself obstructed in the common intercourse of civility, by an uneasy consciousness of my new appearance; as I thought myself more observed, I was more anxious about my mien and behaviour; and the mien which is formed by care is commonly ridiculous. A short time accustomed me to myself, and my dress was without pain, and without pleasure.

For a little while I tried to be a rake, but I began too late; and having by nature no turn for a frolic, was in great danger of ending in a drunkard. A fever, in which not one of my companions paid me a visit, gave me time for reflection. I found that there was no great pleasure in breaking windows and lying in the round-house: and resolved to associate no longer with those whom, though I had treated and bailed them, I could not make friends.

I then changed my measures, kept running horses, and had the comfort of seeing my name very often in the news. I had a chesnut horse, the grandson of *Childers*, who won four plates, and ten by-matches; and a bay filly who carried off the five-years-old plate, and was expected to perform much greater exploits, when my groom broke her wind, because I happened to catch him selling oats for beer. This happiness was soon at an end; there was no pleasure when I lost, and when I won I could not much exalt myself by the virtues of my horse. I grew ashamed of the company of jockey-lords, and resolved to spend no more of my time in the stable.

It was now known that I had money, and would

spend it, and I passed four months in the company of architects, whose whole business was, to persuade me to build a house. I told them that I had more room than I wanted, but could not get rid of their importunities. A new plan was brought me every morning; till at last my constancy was overpowered, and I began to build. The happiness of building lasted but a little while, for though I love to spend, I hate to be cheated; and I soon found, that to build is to be robbed.

How I proceed in the pursuit of happiness, you shall hear when I find myself disposed to write.

I am, SIR,

TIM. RANGER.

N° 63 SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 1759

THE natural progress of the works of men is from rudeness to convenience, from convenience to elegance, and from elegance to nicety.

The first labour is enforced by necessity. The savage finds himself incommoded by heat and cold, by rain and wind; he shelters himself in the hollow of a rock, and learns to dig a cave where there was none before. He finds the sun and the wind excluded by the thicket, and when the accidents of the chase, or the convenience of pasturage, leads him into more open places, he forms a thicket for himself, by planting stakes at proper distances, and laying branches from one to another.

The next gradation of skill and industry produces a house closed with doors, and divided by partitions; and apartments are multiplied and disposed according to the various degrees of power or invention; improvement succeeds improvement, as he that is freed from a greater evil grows impatient of a less, till ease in time is advanced to pleasure.

The mind, set free from the importunities of natural want, gains leisure to go in search of superfluous gratifications, and adds to the uses of habitation the delights of prospect. Then begins the reign of symmetry; orders of architecture are invented, and one part of the edifice is conformed to another, without any other reason, than that the eye may not be offended.

The passage is very short from elegance to luxury. *Ionic* and *Corinthian* columns are soon succeeded by gilt cornices, inlaid floors, and petty ornaments, which show rather the wealth than the taste of the possessor.

Language proceeds, like every thing else, through improvement to degeneracy. The rovers who first take possession of a country, having not many ideas, and those not nicely modified or discriminated, were contented, if by general terms and abrupt sentences they could make their thoughts known to one another; as life begins to be more regulated, and property to become limited, disputes must be decided, and claims adjusted; the differences of things are noted, and distinctness and propriety of expression become necessary. In time, happiness and plenty give rise to curiosity, and the sciences are cultivated for ease and pleasure; to the arts, which are now to be taught, emulation soon adds the art of teaching; and the studious and ambitious contend not only who shall think best, but who shall tell their thoughts in the most pleasing manner.

Then begin the arts of rhetoric and poetry, the regulation of figures, the selection of words, the modulation of periods, the graces of transition, the complication of clauses, and all the delicacies of style and subtilties of composition, useful while they advance perspicuity, and laudable while they increase pleasure, but easy to be refined by needless scrupulosity till they shall more embarrass the writer than assist the reader or delight him.

The first state is commonly antecedent to the practice of writing; the ignorant essays of imperfect diction pass away with the savage generation that uttered them. No nation can trace their language beyond the second period, and even of that it does not often happen that many monuments remain.

The fate of the *English* tongue is like that of others. We know nothing of the scanty jargon of our barbarous ancestors; but we have specimens of our language when it began to be adapted to civil and religious purposes, and find it such as might naturally be expected, artless and simple, unconnected and concise. The writers seem to have desired little more than to be understood, and perhaps seldom aspired to the praise of pleasing. Their verses were considered chiefly as memorial, and therefore did not differ from prose but by the measure or the rhyme.

In this state, varied a little according to the different purposes or abilities of writers, our language may be said to have continued to the time of *Gower*, whom *Chaucer* calls his master, and who, however obscured by his scholar's popularity, seems justly to claim the honour which has been hitherto denied him, of showing his countrymen that something more was to be desired, and that *English* verse might be exalted into poetry.

From the time of *Gower* and *Chaucer*, the *English* writers have studied elegance, and advanced their language, by successive improvements, to as much harmony as it can easily receive, and as much copiousness as human knowledge has hitherto required. These advances have not been made at all times with the same diligence or the same success. Negligence has suspended the course of improvement, or affectation turned it aside; time has elapsed with little change, or change has been made without amendment. But elegance has been long kept in view with attention as near to constancy as life permits, till every man now endeavours to excel others in accuracy, or outshine them in splendor of style, and the danger is, lest care should too soon pass to affectation.

N° 64. SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

As nature has made every man desirous of happiness, I flatter myself, that you and your readers cannot but feel some curiosity to know the sequel of my story; for though, by trying the different schemes of pleasure, I have yet found nothing in which I could finally acquiesce; yet the narrative of my attempts will not be wholly without use, since we always approach nearer to truth as we detect more and more varieties of error.

When I had sold my racers, and put the orders of architecture out of my head, my next resolution was to be a *fine gentleman*. I frequented the polite coffee-houses, grew acquainted with all the men of humour, and gained the right of bowing familiarly to half the nobility. In this new scene of life my great labour was, to learn to laugh. I had been used to consider laughter as the effect of merriment; but I soon learned that it is one of the arts of adulation, and, from laughing only to show that I was pleased, I now began to laugh when I wished to please. This was at first very difficult. I sometimes heard the story with dull indifference; and, not exalting myself to merriment by due gradations, burst out suddenly into an awkward noise, which was not always favourably interpreted. Sometimes I was behind the rest of the company, and lost the grace of laughing by delay, and sometimes when I began at the right time was deficient in loudness or in length. But, by diligent imitation of the best models, I attained at last such flexibility of muscles, that I was always a welcome auditor of a story, and got the reputation of a good-natured fellow.

This was something; but much more was to be done, that I might be universally allowed to be a fine gentleman. I appeared at court on all public days; betted at gaming-tables, and played at all the routs of eminence. I went every night to the opera, took a fiddler of disputed merit under my protection, became the head of a musical faction, and had sometimes concerts at my own house. I once thought to have attained the highest rank of elegance, by taking a foreign singer into keeping. But my favourite fiddler contrived to be arrested on the night of a concert, for a finer suit of clothes than I had ever pre-

sumed to wear, and I lost all the fame of patronage by refusing to bail him.

My next ambition was, to sit for my picture. I spent a whole winter in going from painter to painter, to bespeak a whole length of one, and a half length of another; I talked of nothing but attitudes, draperies, and proper lights; took my friends to see the pictures after every sitting; heard every day of a wonderful performer in crayons and miniature, and sent my pictures to be copied; was told by the judges that they were not like, and was recommended to other artists. At length, being not able to please my friends, I grew less pleased myself, and at last resolved to think no more about it.

It was impossible to live in total idleness: and wandering about in search of something to do, I was invited to a weekly meeting of virtuosos, and felt myself instantaneously seized with an unextinguishable ardour for all natural curiosities. I ran from auction to auction, became a critic in shells and fossils, bought a *Hortus siccus* of inestimable value, and purchased a secret art of preserving insects, which made my collection the envy of the other philosophers. I found this pleasure mingled with much vexation. All the faults of my life were for nine months circulated through the town with the most active malignity, because I happened to catch a moth of peculiar variegation; and because I once outbid all the lovers of shells, and carried off a nautilus, it was hinted that the validity of my uncle's will ought to be disputed. I will not deny that I was very proud both of the moth and of the shell, and gratified myself with the envy of my companions, perhaps more than became a benevolent being. But in time I grew weary of being hated for that which produced

no advantage, gave my shells to children that wanted play-things, and suppressed the art of drying butterflies, because I would not tempt idleness and cruelty to kill them.

I now began to feel life tedious, and wished to store myself with friends, with whom I might grow old in the interchange of benevolence. I had observed that popularity was most easily gained by an open table, and therefore hired a French cook, furnished my sideboard with great magnificence, filled my cellar with wines of pompous appellations, bought every thing that was dear before it was good, and invited all those who were most famous for judging of a dinner. In three weeks my cook gave me warning, and, upon inquiry, told me that Lord *Queasy*, who dined with me the day before, had sent him an offer of double wages. My pride prevailed; I raised his wages, and invited his lordship to another feast. I love plain meat, and was therefore soon weary of spreading a table of which I could not partake. I found that my guests when they went away, criticised their entertainment, and censured my profusion; my cook thought himself necessary, and took upon him the direction of the house; and I could not rid myself of flatterers, or break from slavery, but by shutting up my house, and declaring my resolution to live in lodgings.

After all this, tell me, dear *Idler*, what I must do next; I have health, I have money, and I hope that I have understanding; yet, with all these, I have never been able to pass a single day which I did not wish at an end before sun-set. Tell me, dear *Idler*, what I shall do. I am,

Your humble servant,

TIM. RANGER.

N° 65. SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1759.

THE sequel of *Clarendon*'s history, at last happily published, is an accession to *English* literature equally agreeable to the admirers of elegance and the lovers of truth; many doubtful facts may now be ascertained, and many questions, after long debate, may be determined by decisive authority. He that records transactions in which himself was engaged, has not only an opportunity of knowing innumerable particulars which escape spectators, but has his natural powers exalted by that ardour which always rises at the remembrance of our own importance, and by which every man is enabled to relate his own actions better than another's.

The difficulties through which this work has struggled into light, and the delays with which our hopes have been long mocked, naturally lead the mind to the consideration of the common fate of posthumous compositions.

He who sees himself surrounded by admirers, and whose vanity is hourly feasted with all the luxuries of studied praise, is easily persuaded that his influence will be extended beyond his life; that they who cringe in his presence will reverence his memory, and that those who are proud to be numbered among his friends, will endeavour to vindicate his choice by zeal for his reputation.

With hopes like these, to the executors of *Swift* was committed the history of the last years of Queen *Anne*, and to those of *Pope*, the works which remained unprinted in his closet. The performances of *Pope*

were burnt by those whom he had perhaps selected from all mankind as most likely to publish them; and the history had likewise perished, had not a straggling transcript fallen into busy hands.

The papers left in the closet of *Pieresc* supplied his heirs with a whole winter's fuel; and many of the labours of the learned bishop *Lloyd* were consumed in the kitchen of his descendants.

Some works, indeed, have escaped total destruction, but yet have had reason to lament the fate of orphans exposed to the frauds of unfaithful guardians. How *Hale* would have borne the mutilations which his *Pleas of the Crown* have suffered from the editor, they who know his character will easily conceive.

The original copy of *Burnet*'s history, though promised to some public* library, has been never given; and who then can prove the fidelity of the publication, when the authenticity of *Clarendon*'s history, though printed with the sanction of one of the first universities of the world, had not an unexpected manuscript been happily discovered, would, with the help of factious credulity, have been brought into question by the two lowest of all human beings, a scribbler for a party, and a commissioner of excise.

Variety is often no less mischievous than negligence or dishonesty. He that possesses a valuable manuscript, hopes to raise its esteem by concealment, and delights in the distinction which he imagines himself to obtain by keeping the key of a treasure which he neither uses nor imparts. From him it falls to some other owner, less vain but more negligent, who con-

* It would be proper to reposite, in some public place, the manuscript of Clarendon, which has not escaped all suspicion of unfaithful publication.

siders it as useless lumber, and rids himself of the incumbrance.

Yet there are some works which the authors must consign unpublished to posterity, however uncertain be the event, however hopeless be the trust. He that writes the history of his own times, if he adheres steadily to truth, will write that which his own times will not easily endure. He must be content to reposite his book till all private passions shall cease, and love and hatred give way to curiosity.

But many leave the labours of half their life to their executors and to chance, because they will not send them abroad unfinished, and are unable to finish them, having prescribed to themselves such a degree of exactness as human diligence can scarcely attain. *Lloyd*, says *Burnet*, *did not lay out his learning with the same diligence as he laid it in*. He was always hesitating and inquiring, raising objections and removing them, and waiting for clearer light and fuller discovery. *Baker*, after many years passed in biography, left his manuscripts to be buried in a library, because that was imperfect which could never be perfected.

Of these learned men, let those who aspire to the same praise imitate the diligence, and avoid the scrupulosity. Let it be always remembered that life is short, that knowledge is endless, and that many doubts deserve not to be cleared. Let those whom nature and study have qualified to teach mankind, tell us what they have learned while they are yet able to tell it, and trust their reputation only to themselves.

N° 66. SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1759.

No complaint is more frequently repeated among the learned, than that of the waste made by time among the labours of antiquity. Of those who once filled the civilized world with their renown, nothing is now left but their names, which are left only to raise desires that never can be satisfied, and sorrow which never can be comforted.

Had all the writings of the ancients been faithfully delivered down from age to age, had the *Alexandrian* library been spared, and the *Palatine* repositories remained unimpaired, how much might we have known of which we are now doomed to be ignorant! how many laborious inquiries, and dark conjectures; how many collations of broken hints and mutilated passages might have been spared! We should have known the successions of princes, the revolutions of empire, the actions of the great, and opinions of the wise, the laws and constitutions of every state, and the arts by which public grandeur and happiness are acquired and preserved; we should have traced the progress of life, seen colonies from distant regions take possession of *European* deserts, and troops of savages settled into communities by the desire of keeping what they had acquired; we should have traced the gradations of civility, and travelled upward to the original of things by the light of history, till in remoter times it had glimmered in fable, and at last sunk into darkness.

If the works of imagination had been less diminished, it is likely that all future times might have

been supplied with inexhaustible amusement by the fictions of antiquity. The tragedies of *Sophocles* and *Euripides* would have shown all the stronger passions in all their diversities; and the comedies of *Menander* would have furnished all the maxims of domestic life. Nothing would have been necessary to moral wisdom but to have studied these great masters, whose knowledge would have guided doubt, and whose authority would have silenced cavils.

Such are the thoughts that rise in every student, when his curiosity is eluded, and his searches are frustrated; yet it may perhaps be doubted, whether our complaints are not sometimes inconsiderate, and whether we do not imagine more evil than we feel. Of the ancients, enough remains to excite our emulation and direct our endeavours. Many of the works which time has left us, we know to have been those that were most esteemed, and which antiquity itself considered as models; so that, having the originals, we may without much regret lose the imitations. The obscurity which the want of contemporary writers often produces, only darkens single passages, and those commonly of slight importance The general tendency of every piece may be known; and though that diligence deserves praise which leaves nothing unexamined, yet its miscarriages are not much to be lamented; for the most useful truths are always universal, and unconnected with accidents and customs.

Such is the general conspiracy of human nature against contemporary merit, that, if we had inherited from antiquity enough to afford employment for the laborious, and amusement for the idle, I know not what room would have been left for modern genius or modern industry; almost every subject would have been pre-occupied, and every style would have been fixed by a precedent from which few would

have ventured to depart. Every writer would have had a rival, whose superiority was already acknowledged, and to whose fame his work would, even before it was seen, be marked out for a sacrifice.

We see how little the united experience of mankind hath been able to add to the heroic characters displayed by *Homer*, and how few incidents the fertile imagination of modern *Italy* has yet produced, which may not be found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It is likely, that if all the works of the *Athenian* philosophers had been extant, *Malbranche* and *Locke* would have been condemned to be silent readers of the ancient metaphysicians; and it is apparent, that, if the old writers had all remained, the *Idler* could not have written a disquisition on the loss.

N° 67. SATURDAY, JULY 28, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

In the observations which you have made on the various opinions and pursuits of mankind, you must often, in literary conversations, have met with men who consider dissipation as the great enemy of the intellect; and maintain, that, in proportion as the student keeps himself within the bounds of a settled plan, he will more certainly advance in science.

This opinion is, perhaps, generally true; yet when we contemplate the inquisitive nature of the human

mind, and its perpetual impatience of all restraint, it may be doubted whether the faculties may not be contracted by confining the attention; and whether it may not sometimes be proper to risk the certainty of little for the chance of much. Acquisitions of knowledge, like blazes of genius, are often fortuitous. Those who had proposed to themselves a methodical course of reading, light by accident on a new book, which seizes their thoughts and kindles their curiosity, and opens an unexpected prospect, to which the way which they had prescribed to themselves would never have conducted them.

To enforce and illustrate my meaning, I have sent you a journal of three days employment, found among the papers of a late intimate acquaintance; who, as will plainly appear, was a man of vast designs, and of vast performances, though he sometimes designed one thing, and performed another. I allow that the *Spectator*'s inimitable productions of this kind may well discourage all subsequent journalists; but as the subject of this is different from that of any which the *Spectator* has given us, I leave it to you to publish or suppress it.

Mem. The following three days I propose to give up to reading; and intend, after all the delays which have obtruded themselves upon me, to finish my *Essay on the Extent of the Mental Powers;* to revise my *Treatise on Logic;* to begin the *Epic* which I have long projected; to proceed in my perusal of the *Scriptures* with *Grotius*'s *Comment;* and at my leisure to regale myself with the works of classics, ancient and modern, and to finish my *Ode to Astronomy.*

Monday.] Designed to rise at six, but, by my servant's laziness, my fire was not lighted before eight, when I dropped into a slumber that lasted till nine,

at which time I arose, and after breakfast at ten sat down to study, proposing to begin upon my *Essay:* but, finding occasion to consult a passage in *Plato*, was absorbed in the perusal of the *Republic* till twelve, I had neglected to forbid company, and now enters *Tom Careless*, who after half an hour's chat, insisted upon my going with him to enjoy an absurd character, that he had appointed, by an advertisement, to meet him at a particular coffee-house. After we had for some time entertained ourselves with him, we sallied out, designing each to repair to his home; but, as it fell out, coming up in the street to a man whose steel by his side declared him a butcher, we overheard him opening an address to a genteelish sort of young Lady, whom he walked with: "Miss, though your father is master "of a coal-lighter, and you will be a great fortune, "'tis true; yet I wish I may be cut into quarters, "if it is not only love, and not lucre of gain, that "is my motive for offering terms of marriage." As this lover proceeded in his speech, he misled us the length of three streets, in admiration at the unlimited power of the tender passion, that could soften even the heart of a butcher. We then adjourned to a tavern, and from thence to one of the public gardens, where I was regaled with a most amusing variety of men possessing great talents, so discoloured by affectation, that they only made them eminently ridiculous; shallow things, who, by continual dissipation, had annihilated the few ideas nature had given them, and yet were celebrated for wonderful pretty gentlemen; young ladies extolled for their wit, because they were handsome; illiterate empty women, as well as men, in high life, admired for their knowledge, from their being resolutely positive; and women of real understanding so far from pleasing the polite million, that they frightened

them away, and were left solitary. When we quitted this entertaining scene, *Tom* pressed me irresistibly to sup with him. I reached home at twelve, and then reflected, that though indeed I had, by remarking various characters, improved my insight into human nature, yet still I neglected the studies proposed, and accordingly took up my *Treatise on Logic*, to give it the intended revisal, but found my spirits too much agitated, and could not forbear a few satirical lines, under the title of *The Evening's Walk*.

Tuesday.] At breakfast, seeing my *Ode to Astronomy* lying on my desk, I was struck with a train of ideas, that I thought might contribute to its improvement. I immediately rang my bell to forbid all visitants, when my servant opened the door, with, "Sir, Mr. *Jeffery Gape*." My cup dropped out of one hand, and my poem out of the other. I could scarcely ask him to sit; he told me he was going to walk, but, as there was a likelihood of rain, he would sit with me; he said, he intended at first to have called at Mr. *Vacant*'s, but as he had not seen me a great while, he did not mind coming out of his way to wait on me; I made him a bow, but thanks for the favour stuck in my throat. I asked him if he had been to the coffee-house; he replied, two hours.

Under the oppression of this dull interruption, I sat looking wishfully at the clock; for which, to increase my satisfaction, I had chosen the inscription, *Art is long, and life is short;* exchanging questions and answers at long intervals, and not without some hints that the weather-glass promised fair weather. At half an hour after three he told me he would trespass on me for a dinner, and desired me to send to his house for a bundle of papers, about inclosing a common upon his estate, which he would read to

me in the evening. I declared myself busy, and Mr. *Gape* went away.

Having dined, to compose my chagrin, I took my *Virgil*, and several other classics, but could not calm my mind, or proceed in my scheme. At about five I laid my hand on a Bible that lay on my table, at first with coldness and insensibility; but was imperceptibly engaged in a close attention to its sublime morality, and felt my heart expanded by warm philanthropy, and exalted to dignity of sentiment. I then censured my too great solicitude, and my disgust conceived at my acquaintance, who had been so far from designing to offend, that he only meant to show kindness and respect. In this strain of mind I wrote *An Essay on Benevolence*, and *An Elegy on Sublunary Disappointments*. When I had finished these at eleven, I supped, and recollected how little I had adhered to my plan, and almost questioned the possibility of pursuing any settled and uniform design; however, I was not so far persuaded of the truth of these suggestions, but that I resolved to try once more at my scheme. As I observed the moon shining through my window, from a calm and bright sky, spangled with innumerable stars, I indulged a pleasing meditation on the splendid scene, and finished my *Ode to Astronomy*.

Wednesday.] Rose at seven, and employed three hours in perusal of the *Scriptures* with *Grotius*'s *Comment;* and after breakfast fell into meditation concerning my projected *Epic;* and being in some doubt as to the particular lives of some heroes, whom I proposed to celebrate, I consulted *Bayle* and *Moreri*, and was engaged two hours in examining various lives and characters, but then resolved to go to my employment. When I was seated at my desk, and began to feel the glowing succession of poetical ideas, my servant brought me a letter from

a lawyer requiring my instant attendance at *Gray's Inn* for half an hour. I went full of vexation, and was involved in business till eight at night; and then, being too much fatigued to study, supped, and went to bed.

HERE my friend's journal concludes, which perhaps is pretty much a picture of the manner in which many prosecute their studies. I therefore resolved to send it you, imagining, that, if you think it worthy of appearing in your paper, some of your readers may receive entertainment by recognizing a resemblance between my friend's conduct and their own. It must be left to the *Idler* accurately to ascertain the proper methods of advancing in literature; but this one position, deducible from what has been said above, may, I think, be reasonably asserted, that he who finds himself strongly attracted to any particular study, though it may happen to be out of his proposed scheme, if it is not trifling or vicious, had better continue his application to it, since it is likely that he will with much more ease and expedition, attain that which a warm inclination stimulates him to pursue, than that at which a prescribed law compels him to toil.

I am, SIR, &c.

N° 68. SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1759.

AMONG the studies which have exercised the ingenious and the learned for more than three centuries, none has been more diligently or more successfully cultivated than the art of translation; by which the impediments which bar the way to science are, in some measure, removed, and the multiplicity of languages becomes less incommodious.

Of every other kind of writing the ancients have left us models which all succeeding ages have laboured to imitate; but translation may justly be claimed by the moderns as their own. In the first ages of the world instruction was commonly oral, and learning traditional, and what was not written could not be translated. When alphabetical writing made the conveyance of opinions and the transmission of events more easy and certain, literature did not flourish in more than one country at once, or distant nations had little commerce with each other; and those few whom curiosity sent abroad in quest of improvement, delivered their acquisitions in their own manner, desirous perhaps to be considered as the inventors of that which they had learned from others.

The *Greeks* for a time travelled into *Egypt*, but they translated no books from the *Egyptian* language; and when the *Macedonians* had overthrown the empire of *Persia*, the countries that became subject to *Grecian* dominion studied only the *Grecian* literature. The books of the conquered nations, if they had any among them, sunk into obli-

vion; *Greece* considered herself as the mistress, if not as the parent of arts; her language contained all that was supposed to be known, and, except the sacred writings of the Old Testament, I know not that the library of *Alexandria* adopted any thing from a foreign tongue.

The *Romans* confessed themselves the scholars of the *Greeks*, and do not appear to have expected, what has since happened, that the ignorance of succeeding ages would prefer them to their teachers. Every man, who in *Rome* aspired to the praise of literature, thought it necessary to learn *Greek*, and had no need of versions when they could study the originals. Translation, however, was not wholly neglected. Dramatic poems could be understood by the people in no language but their own, and the *Romans* were sometimes entertained with the tragedies of *Euripides* and the comedies of *Menander*. Other works were sometimes attempted; in an old scholiast there is mention of a *Latin Iliad;* and we have not wholly lost *Tully*'s version of the poem of *Aratus;* but it does not appear that any man grew eminent by interpreting another, and perhaps it was more frequent to translate for exercise or amusement, than for fame.

The *Arabs* were the first nation who felt the ardour of translation: when they had subdued the eastern provinces of the *Greek* empire, they found their captives wiser than themselves, and made haste to relieve their wants by imparted knowledge. They discovered that many might grow wise by the labour of a few, and that improvements might be made with speed, when they had the knowledge of former ages in their own language. They therefore made haste to lay hold on medicine and philosophy, and turned their chief authors into *Arabic*. Whether they attempted the poets is not known; their literary zeal

was vehement, but it was short, and probably expired before they had time to add the arts of elegance to those of necessity.

The study of ancient literature was interrupted in *Europe* by the eruption of the northern nations, who subverted the *Roman* empire, and erected new kingdoms with new languages. It is not strange, that such confusion should suspend literary attention; those who lost, and those who gained dominion, had immediate difficulties to encounter, and immediate miseries to redress, and had little leisure, amidst the violence of war, the trepidation of flight, the distresses of forced migration, or the tumults of unsettled conquest, to inquire after speculative truth, to enjoy the amusement of imaginary adventures, to know the history of former ages, or study the events of any other lives. But no sooner had this chaos of dominion sunk into order, than learning began again to flourish in the calm of peace. When life and possessions were secure, convenience and enjoyment were soon sought, learning was found the highest gratification of the mind, and translation became one of the means by which it was imparted.

At last, by a concurrence of many causes, the *European* world was rouzed from its lethargy; those arts which had been long obscurely studied in the gloom of monasteries became the general favourites of mankind; every nation vied with its neighbour for the prize of learning; the epidemical emulation, spread from south to north, and curiosity and translation found their way to *Britain*.

N° 69. SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1759.

He that reviews the progress of *English* literature, will find that translation was very early cultivated among us, but that some principles either wholly erroneous or too far extended, hindered our success from being always equal to our diligence.

Chaucer, who is generally considered as the father of our poetry, has left a version of *Boetius on the Comforts of Philosophy*, the book which seems to have been the favourite of the middle ages, which had been translated into *Saxon* by King *Alfred*, and illustrated with a copious *comment* ascribed to *Aquinas*. It may be supposed that *Chaucer* would apply more than common attention to an author of so much celebrity, yet he has attempted nothing higher than a version strictly literal, and has degraded the poetical parts to prose, that the constraint of versification might not obstruct his zeal for fidelity.

Caxton taught us typography about the year 1474. The first book printed in *English* was a translation. *Caxton* was both the translator and printer of the *Destruction of Troye*, a book which, in that infancy of learning, was considered as the best account of the fabulous ages, and which, though now driven out of notice by authors of no greater use or value, still continued to be read in *Caxton's English* to the beginning of the present century.

Caxton proceeded as he began, and, except the poems of *Gower* and *Chaucer*, printed nothing but translations from the *French*, in which the original is

so scrupulously followed, that they afford us little knowledge of our own language; though the words are *English*, the phrase is foreign.

As learning advanced, new works were adopted into our language, but I think with little improvement of the art of translation, though foreign nations and other languages offered us models of a better method; till in the age of *Elizabeth* we began to find that greater liberty was necessary to elegance, and that elegance was necessary to general reception; some essays were then made upon the *Italian* poets, which deserve the praise and gratitude of posterity.

But the old practice was not suddenly forsaken; *Holland* filled the nation with literal translation; and what is yet more strange, the same exactness was obstinately practised in the versions of the poets. This absurd labour of construing into rhyme was countenanced by *Jonson* in his version of *Horace*; and whether it be that more men have learning than genius, or that the endeavours of that time were more directed towards knowledge than delight, the accuracy of *Jonson* found more imitators than the elegance of *Fairfax*; and *May*, *Sandys*, and *Holiday*, confined themselves to the toil of rendering line for line, not indeed with equal felicity, for *May* and *Sandys* were poets, and *Holiday* only a scholar and a critic.

Feltham appears to consider it as the established law of poetical translation, that the lines should be neither more nor fewer than those of the original; and so long had this prejudice prevailed, that *Denham* praises *Fanshaw*'s version of *Guarini* as the example of a *new and noble way*, as the first attempt to break the boundaries of custom, and assert the natural freedom of the Muse.

In the general emulation of wit and genius which

the festivity of the Restoration produced, the poets shook off their constraint, and considered translation as no longer confined to servile closeness. But reformation is seldom the work of pure virtue, or unassisted reason. Translation was improved more by accident than conviction. The writers of the foregoing age had at least learning equal to their genius; and being often more able to explain the sentiments or illustrate the allusions of the ancients, than to exhibit their graces and transfuse their spirit, were perhaps willing sometimes to conceal their want of poetry by profusion of literature, and therefore translated literally, that their fidelity might shelter their insipidity or harshness. The wits of *Charles*'s time had seldom more than slight and superficial views; and their care was, to hide their want of learning behind the colours of a gay imagination; they therefore translated always with freedom, sometimes with licentiousness, and perhaps expected that their readers should accept sprightliness for knowledge, and consider ignorance and mistake as the impatience and negligence of a mind too rapid to stop at difficulties, and too elevated to descend to minuteness.

Thus was translation made more easy to the writer, and more delightful to the reader; and there is no wonder if ease and pleasure have found their advocates. The paraphrastic liberties have been almost universally admitted; and *Sherbourn*, whose learning was eminent, and who had no need of any excuse to pass slightly over obscurities, is the only writer who in later times has attempted to justify or revive the ancient severity.

There is undoubtedly a mean to be observed. *Dryden* saw very early that closeness best preserved an author's sense, and that freedom best exhibited his spirit; he therefore will deserve the highest

praise, who can give a representation at once faithful and pleasing, who can convey the same thoughts with the same graces, and who, when he translates, changes nothing but the language.

N° 70. SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1759.

Few faults of style, whether real or imaginary, excite the malignity of a more numerous class of readers than the use of hard words.

If an author be supposed to involve his thoughts in voluntary obscurity, and to obstruct, by unnecessary difficulties, a mind eager in pursuit of truth; if he writes not to make others learned, but to boast the learning which he possesses himself, and wishes to be admired rather than understood, he counteracts the first end of writing, and justly suffers the utmost severity of censure, or the more afflictive severity of neglect.

But words are only hard to those who do not understand them; and the critic ought always to inquire, whether he is incommoded by the fault of the writer, or by his own.

Every author does not write for every reader; many questions are such as the illiterate part of mankind can have neither interest nor pleasure in discussing, and which therefore it would be a useless endeavour to level with common minds, by tiresome circumlocutions or laborious explanations; and many subjects of general use may be treated in

a different manner, as the book is intended for the learned or the ignorant. Diffusion and explication are necessary to the instruction of those who, being neither able nor accustomed to think for themselves, can learn only what is expressly taught; but they who can form parallels, discover consequences, and multiply conclusions, are best pleased with involution of argument and compression of thought; they desire only to receive the seeds of knowledge which they may branch out by their own power, to have the way to truth pointed out which they can then follow without a guide.

The Guardian directs one of his pupils *to think with the wise, but speak with the vulgar.* This is a precept specious enough, but not always practicable. Difference of thoughts will produce difference of language. He that thinks with more extent than another will want words of larger meaning; he that thinks with more subtilty will seek for terms of more nice discrimination; and where is the wonder, since words are but the images of things, that he who never knew the original should not know the copies?

Yet vanity inclines us to find faults any where rather than in ourselves. He that reads and grows no wiser, seldom suspects his own deficiency; but complains of hard words and obscure sentences, and asks why books are written which cannot be understood?

Among the hard words which are no longer to be used, it has been long the custom to number terms of art. *Every man* (says *Swift*) *is more able to explain the subject of an art than its professors; a farmer will tell you, in two words that he has broken his leg; but a surgeon, after a long discourse, shall leave you as ignorant as you were before.* This could only have been said by such an exact observer of life, in

gratification of malignity, or in ostentation of acuteness. Every hour produces instances of the necessity of terms of art. Mankind could never conspire in uniform affectation; it is not but by necessity that every science and every trade has its peculiar language. They that content themselves with general ideas may rest in general terms; but those, whose studies or employments force them upon closer inspection, must have names for particular parts, and words by which they may express various modes of combination, such as none but themselves have occasion to consider.

Artists are indeed sometimes ready to suppose that none can be strangers to words to which themselves are familiar, talk to an incidental inquirer as they talk to one another, and make their knowledge ridiculous by injudicious obtrusion. An art cannot be taught but by its proper terms, but it is not always necessary to teach the art.

That the vulgar express their thoughts clearly is far from true; and what perspicuity can be found among them proceeds not from the easiness of their language, but the shallowness of their thoughts. He that sees a building as a common spectator, contents himself with relating that it is great or little, mean or splendid, lofty or low; all these words are intelligible and common, but they convey no distinct or limited ideas; if he attempts, without the terms of architecture, to delineate the parts, or enumerate the ornaments, his narration at once becomes unintelligible. The terms, indeed, generally displease, because they are understood by few; but they are little understood only because few that look upon an edifice, examine its parts, or analyse its columns into their members.

The state of every other art is the same; as it is cursorily surveyed or accurately examined, different

forms of expression become proper. In morality it is one thing to discuss the niceties of the casuist, and another to direct the practice of common life. In agriculture, he that instructs the farmer to plough and sow, may convey his notions without the words which he would find necessary in explaining to philosophers the process of vegetation; and if he, who has nothing to do but to be honest by the shortest way, will perplex his mind with subtile speculations; or if he, whose task is to reap and thresh, will not be contented without examining the evolution of the seed, and circulation of the sap, the writers whom either shall consult are very little to be blamed, though it should sometimes happen that they are read in vain.

N° 71. SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1759.

Dick Shifter was born in *Cheapside*, and having passed reputably through all the classes of *St. Paul*'s school, has been for some years a student in the *Temple*. He is of opinion, that intense application dulls the faculties, and thinks it necessary to temper the severity of the law by books that engage the mind, but do not fatigue it. He has therefore made a copious collection of plays, poems, and romances, to which he has recourse when he fancies himself tired with statutes and reports; and he seldom inquires very nicely whether he is weary or idle.

Dick has received from his favourite authors very strong impressions of a country-life; and though his furthest excursions have been to *Greenwich* on one

side, and *Chelsea* on the other, he has talked for several years, with great pomp of language and elevation of sentiments, about a state too high for contempt and too low for envy, about homely quiet, and blameless simplicity, pastoral delights, and rural innocence.

His friends who had estates in the country, often invited him to pass the summer among them, but something or other had always hindered him; and he considered, that to reside in the house of another man was to incur a kind of dependence inconsistent with that laxity of life which he had imaged as the chief good.

This summer he resolved to be happy, and procured a lodging to be taken for him at a solitary house, situated about thirty miles from *London*, on the banks of a small river, with corn fields before it, and a hill on each side covered with wood. He concealed the place of his retirement, that none might violate his obscurity, and promised himself many a happy day when he should hide himself among the trees, and contemplate the tumults and vexations of the town.

He stepped into the post-chaise with his heart beating and his eyes sparkling, was conveyed through many varieties of delightful prospects, saw hills and meadows, corn fields and pasture, succeed each other, and for four hours charged none of his poets, with fiction or exaggeration. He was now within six miles of happiness, when, having never felt so much agitation before, he began to wish his journey at an end, and the last hour was passed in changing his posture, and quarrelling with his driver.

An hour may be tedious but cannot be long. He at length alighted at his new dwelling, and was received as he expected; he looked round upon the hills and rivulets, but his joints were stiff and his muscles sore, and his first request was to see his bed-chamber.

He rested well, and ascribed the soundness of his sleep to the stillness of the country. He expected

from that time nothing but nights of quiet and days of rapture, and, as soon as he had risen, wrote an account of his new state to one of his friends in the *Temple*.

Dear FRANK;

I never pitied thee before. I am now as I could wish every man of wisdom and virtue to be, in the regions of calm content and placid meditation; with all the beauties of nature soliciting my notice, and all the diversities of pleasure courting my acceptance; the birds are chirping in the hedges, and the flowers blooming in the mead; the breeze is whistling in the wood, and the sun dancing on the water. I can now say, with truth, that a man, capable of enjoying the purity of happiness is never more busy than in his hours of leisure, nor ever less solitary than in a place of solitude.

I am, dear FRANK, *&c.*

When he had sent away his letter, he walked into the wood, with some inconvenience, from the furze that pricked his legs, and the briars that scratched his face. He at last sat down under a tree, and heard with great delight a shower, by which he was not wet, rattling among the branches: this, said he, is the true image of obscurity; we hear of troubles and commotions, but never feel them.

His amusement did not overpower the calls of nature, and he therefore went back to order his dinner. He knew that the country produces whatever is eaten or drunk, and, imagining that he was now at the source of luxury, resolved to indulge himself with dainties which he supposed might be procured at a price next to nothing, if any price at all was expected; and intended to amaze the rus-

tics with his generosity, by paying more than they would ask. Of twenty dishes which he named, he was amazed to find that scarcely one was to be had; and heard, with astonishment and indignation, that all the fruits of the earth were sold at a higher price than in the streets of *London*.

His meal was short and sullen; and he retired again to his tree, to inquire how dearness could be consistent with abundance, or how fraud should be practised by simplicity. He was not satisfied with his own speculations, and, returning home early in the evening, went a while from window to window, and found that he wanted something to do.

He inquired for a newspaper, and was told that farmers never minded news, but that they could send for it from the ale-house. A messenger was dispatched, who ran away at full speed, but loitered an hour behind the hedges, and at last coming back with his feet purposely bemired, instead of expressing the gratitude which Mr. *Shifter* expected for the bounty of a shilling, said, that the night was wet, and the way dirty, and he hoped that his worship would not think it much to give him half a crown.

Dick now went to bed with some abatement of his expectations; but sleep, I know not how, revives our hopes, and rekindles our desires. He rose early in the morning, surveyed the landscape, and was pleased. He walked out, and passed from field to field, without observing any beaten path, and wondered that he had not seen the shepherdesses dancing, nor heard the swains piping to their flocks.

At last he saw some reapers and harvest-women at dinner. Here, said he, are the true *Arcadians*, and advanced courteously towards them, as afraid of confusing them by the dignity of his presence. They acknowledged his superiority by no other

token than that of asking him for something to drink. He imagined that he had now purchased the privilege of discourse, and began to descend to familiar questions, endeavouring to accommodate his discourse to the grossness of rustic understandings. The clowns soon found that he did not know wheat from rye, and began to despise him; one of the boys, by pretending to show him a bird's nest, decoyed him into a ditch; and one of the wenches sold him a bargain.

This walk had given him no great pleasure; but he hoped to find other rustics less coarse of manners, and less mischievous of disposition. Next morning he was accosted by an attorney, who told him, that, unless he made farmer *Dobson* satisfaction for trampling his grass, he had orders to indict him. *Shifter* was offended but not terrified; and, telling the attorney that he was himself a lawyer, talked so volubly of pettifoggers and barraters, that he drove him away.

Finding his walks thus interrupted, he was inclined to ride, and being pleased with the appearance of a horse that was grazing in a neighbouring meadow, inquired the owner, who warranted him sound, and would not sell him, but that he was too fine for a plain man. *Dick* paid down the price, and, riding out to enjoy the evening, fell with his new horse into a ditch; they got out with difficulty, and, as he was going to mount again, a countryman looked at the horse, and perceived him to be blind. *Dick* went to the seller, and demanded back his money; but was told that a man who rented his ground must do the best for himself, that his landlord had his rent though the year was barren, and that, whether horses had eyes or no, he should sell them to the highest bidder.

Shifter now began to be tired with rustic simpli-

city, and on the fifth day took possession again of his chambers, and bade farewell to the regions of calm content and placid meditation.

N° 72. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1759.

Men complain of nothing more frequently than of deficient memory; and, indeed, every one finds that many of the ideas which he desired to retain have slipped irretrievably away; that the acquisitions of the mind are sometimes equally fugitive with the gifts of fortune; and that a short intermission of attention more certainly lessens knowledge than impairs an estate.

To assist this weakness of our nature, many methods have been proposed, all of which may be justly suspected of being ineffectual; for no art of memory, however its effects have been boasted or admired, has been ever adopted into general use, nor have those who possessed it appeared to excel others in readiness of recollection or multiplicity of attainments.

There is another art of which all have felt the want, though *Themistocles* only confessed it. We suffer equal pain from the pertinacious adhesion of unwelcome images, as from the evanescence of those which are pleasing and useful; and it may be doubted whether we should be more benefited by the art of memory or the art of forgetfulness.

Forgetfulness is necessary to remembrance. Ideas are retained by renovation of that impression which time is always wearing away, and which new images

are striving to obliterate. If useless thoughts could be expelled from the mind, all the valuable parts of our knowledge would more frequently recur, and every recurrence would reinstate them in their former place.

It is impossible to consider, without some regret, how much might have been learned, or how much might have been invented by a rational and vigorous application of time, uselessly or painfully passed in the revocation of events which have left neither good nor evil behind them, in grief for misfortunes either repaired or irreparable, in resentment of injuries known only to ourselves, of which death has put the authors beyond our power.

Philosophy has accumulated precept upon precept, to warn us against the anticipation of future calamities. All useless misery is certainly folly, and he that feels evils before they come may be deservedly censured; yet surely to dread the future is more reasonable than to lament the past. The business of life is to go forwards: he who sees evil in prospect meets it in his way; but he who catches it by retrospection turns back to find it. That which is feared may sometimes be avoided, but that which is regretted to-day may be regretted again to-morrow.

Regret is indeed useful and virtuous, and not only allowable but necessary, when it tends to the amendment of life, or to admonition of error which we may be again in danger of committing. But a very small part of the moments spent in meditation on the past, produce any reasonable caution or salutary sorrow. Most of the mortifications that we have suffered, arose from the concurrence of local and temporary circumstances, which can never meet again; and most of our disappointments have suc-

ceeded those expectations, which life allows not to be formed a second time.

It would add much to human happiness, if an art could be taught of forgetting all of which the remembrance is at once useless and afflictive, if that pain which never can end in pleasure could be driven totally away, that the mind might perform its functions without incumbrance, and the past might no longer encroach upon the present.

Little can be done well to which the whole mind is not applied; the business of every day calls for the day to which it is assigned; and he will have no leisure to regret yesterday's vexations who resolves not to have a new subject of regret to-morrow.

But to forget or to remember at pleasure, are equally beyond the power of man. Yet as memory may be assisted by method, and the decays of knowledge repaired by stated times of recollection, so the power of forgetting is capable of improvement. Reason will, by a resolute contest, prevail over imagination, and the power may be obtained of transferring the attention as judgment shall direct.

The incursions of troublesome thoughts are often violent and importunate; and it is not easy to a mind accustomed to their inroads to expel them immediately by putting better images into motion; but this enemy of quiet is above all others weakened by every defeat; the reflexion which has been once overpowered and ejected, seldom returns with any formidable vehemence.

Employment is the great instrument of intellectual dominion. The mind cannot retire from its enemy into total vacancy, or turn aside from one object but by passing to another. The gloomy and the resentful are always found among those who have nothing to do, or who do nothing. We must

be busy about good or evil, and he to whom the present offers nothing will often be looking backward on the past.

N° 73. SATURDAY, SEPT. 8, 1759.

That every man would be rich if a wish could obtain riches, is a position which I believe few will contest, at least in a nation like ours, in which commerce has kindled an universal emulation of wealth, and in which money receives all the honours which are the proper right of knowledge and of virtue.

Yet though we are all labouring for gold as for the chief good, and, by the natural effort of unwearied diligence, have found many expeditious methods of obtaining it, we have not been able to improve the art of using it, or to make it produce more happiness than it afforded in former times, when every declaimer expatiated on its mischiefs, and every philosopher taught his followers to despise it.

Many of the dangers imputed of old to exorbitant wealth are now at an end. The rich are neither way-laid by robbers nor watched by informers; there is nothing to be dreaded from proscriptions, or seizures. The necessity of concealing treasure has long ceased; no man now needs counterfeit mediocrity, and condemn his plate and jewels to caverns and darkness, or feast his mind with the consciousness of clouded splendor, of finery which

is useless till it is shown, and which he dares not show.

In our time the poor are strongly tempted to assume the appearance of wealth, but the wealthy very rarely desire to be thought poor; for we are all at full liberty to display riches by every mode of ostentation. We fill our houses with useless ornaments, only to show that we can buy them; we cover our coaches with gold, and employ artists in the discovery of new fashions of expense; and yet it cannot be found that riches produce happiness.

Of riches, as of every thing else, the hope is more than the enjoyment; while we consider them as the means to be used, at some future time, for the attainment of felicity, we press on our pursuit ardently and vigorously, and that ardour secures us from weariness of ourselves; but no sooner do we sit down to enjoy our acquisitions, than we find them insufficient to fill up the vacuities of life.

One cause which is not always observed of the insufficiency of riches is, that they very seldom make their owner rich. To be rich is to have more than is desired, and more than is wanted; to have something which may be spent without reluctance, and scattered without care, with which the sudden demands of desire may be gratified, the casual freaks of fancy indulged, or the unexpected opportunities of benevolence improved.

Avarice is always poor, but poor by her own fault. There is another poverty to which the rich are exposed with less guilt by the officiousness of others. Every man, eminent for exuberance of fortune, is surrounded from morning to evening, and from evening to midnight, by flatterers, whose art of adulation

consists in exciting artificial wants, and in forming new schemes of profusion.

Tom Tranquil, when he came to age, found himself in possession of a fortune of which the twentieth part might, perhaps, have made him rich. His temper is easy, and his affections soft; he receives every man with kindness, and hears him with credulity. His friends took care to settle him by giving him a wife, whom, having no particular inclination, he rather accepted than chose, because he was told that she was proper for him.

He was now to live with dignity proportionate to his fortune. What his fortune requires or admits *Tom* does not know, for he has little skill in computation, and none of his friends think it their interest to improve it. If he was suffered to live by his own choice, he would leave every thing as he finds it, and pass through the world distinguished only by inoffensive gentleness. But the ministers of luxury have marked him out as one at whose expense they may exercise their arts. A companion, who had just learned the names of the *Italian* masters, runs from sale to sale, and buys pictures, for which Mr. *Tranquil* pays, without inquiring where they shall be hung. Another fills his garden with statues, which *Tranquil* wishes away, but dares not remove. One of his friends is learning architecture, by building him a house, which he passed by and inquired to whom it belonged; another has been for three years digging canals, and raising mounts; cutting trees down in one place, and planting them in another, on which *Tranquil* looks with a serene indifference, without asking what will be the cost. Another projector tells him that a water-work, like that of *Versailles*, will complete the beauties of his seat, and lays his draughts before him; *Tranquil* turns his eyes upon them, and the artist begins his

explanations; *Tranquil* raises no objections, but orders him to begin the work, that he may escape from talk which he does not understand.

Thus a thousand hands are busy at his expense, without adding to his pleasures. He pays and receives visits, and has loitered in public or in solitude, talking in summer of the town, and in winter of the country, without knowing that his fortune is impaired, till his steward told him this morning that he could pay the workmen no longer but by mortgaging a manor.

N° 74. SATURDAY, SEPT. 15, 1759.

In the mythological pedigree of learning, memory is made the mother of the muses, by which the masters of ancient wisdom, perhaps, meant to show the necessity of storing the mind copiously with true notions, before the imagination should be suffered to form fictions or collect embellishments; for the works of an ignorant poet can afford nothing higher than pleasing sound, and fiction is of no other use than to display the treasures of memory.

The necessity of memory to the acquisition of knowledge is inevitably felt and universally allowed, so that scarcely any other of the mental faculties are commonly considered as necessary to a student: he that admires the proficiency of another, always attributes it to the happiness of this memory; and he that laments his own defects, concludes with a wish that his memory was better.

It is evident that when the power of retention is weak, all the attempts at eminence of knowledge must be vain; and as few are willing to be doomed to perpetual ignorance, I may, perhaps, afford consolation to some that have fallen too easily into despondence, by observing that such weakness is, in my opinion, very rare, and that few have reason to complain of nature as unkindly sparing of the gifts of memory.

In the common business of life, we find the memory of one like that of another, and honestly impute omissions not to involuntary forgetfulness, but culpable inattention; but in literary inquiries, failure is imputed rather to want of memory than of diligence.

We consider ourselves as defective in memory either because we remember less than we desire, or less than we suppose others to remember.

Memory is like all other human powers, with which no man can be satisfied who measures them by what he can conceive, or by what he can desire. He whose mind is most capacious, finds it much too narrow for his wishes; he that remembers most, remembers little compared with what he forgets. He, therefore, that, after the perusal of a book, finds few ideas remaining in his mind, is not to consider the disappointment as peculiar to himself or to resign all hopes of improvement, because he does not retain what even the author has, perhaps, forgotten.

He who compares his memory with that of others, is often too hasty to lament the inequality. Nature has sometimes, indeed, afforded examples of enormous, wonderful, and gigantic memory. *Scaliger* reports of himself, that, in his youth, he could repeat above an hundred verses, having once read them; and *Barthicus* declares, that he wrote

his *Comment upon Claudian* without consulting the text. But not to have such degrees of memory is no more to be lamented than not to have the strength of *Hercules*, or the swiftness of *Achilles*. He that, in the distribution of good, has an equal share with common men, may justly be contented. Where there is no striking disparity, it is difficult to know of two which remembers most, and still more difficult to discover which reads with greater attention, which has renewed the first impression by more frequent repetitions, or by what accidental combination of ideas either mind might have united any particular narrative or argument to its former stock.

But memory, however impartially distributed, so often deceives our trust, that almost every man attempts, by some artifice or other, to secure its fidelity.

It is the practice of many readers to note, in the margin of their books, the most important passages, the strongest arguments, or the brightest sentiments. Thus they load their minds with superfluous attention, repress the vehemence of curiosity by useless deliberation, and by frequent interruption break the current of narration or the chain of reason, and at last close the volume, and forget the passages and marks together.

Others I have found unalterably persuaded that nothing is certainly remembered but what is transcribed; and they have, therefore, passed weeks and months in transferring large quotations to a common-place book. Yet why any part of a book, which can be consulted at pleasure, should be copied, I was never able to discover. The hand has no closer correspondence with the memory than the eye. The act of writing itself distracts the thoughts, and what is read twice, is commonly

better remembered than what is transcribed. This method, therefore, consumes time without assisting memory.

The true art of memory is the art of attention. No man will read with much advantage who is not able, at pleasure, to evacuate his mind, or who brings not to his author an intellect defecated and pure, neither turbid with care, nor agitated by pleasure. If the repositories of thought are already full, what can they receive; if the mind is employed on the past or future, the book will be held before the eyes in vain. What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention; but the books which are consulted by occasional necessity, and perused with impatience, seldom leave any traces on the mind.

N° 75. SATURDAY, SEPT. 22, 1759.

In the time when *Bassora* was considered as the school of *Asia*, and flourished by the reputation of its professors, and the confluence of its students, among the pupils that listened round the chair of *Albumazar* was *Gelaleddin*, a native of *Tauris*, in *Persia*, a young man amiable in his manners and beautiful in his form, of boundless curiosity, incessant diligence, and irresistible genius, of quick apprehension, and tenacious memory, accurate without narrowness, and eager for novelty without inconstancy.

No sooner did *Gelaleddin* appear at *Bassora*, than

his virtues and abilities raised him to distinction. He passed from class to class rather admired than envied by those whom the rapidity of his progress left behind; he was consulted by his fellow-students as an oraculous guide, and admitted as a competent auditor to the conferences of the sages.

After a few years, having passed through all the exercises of probation, *Gelaleddin* was invited to a professor's seat, and intreated to increase the splendor of *Bassora*. *Gelaleddin* affected to deliberate on the proposal, with which, before he considered it, he resolved to comply; and next morning retired to a garden planted for the recreation of the students, and entering a solitary walk, began to meditate upon his future life.

"If I am thus eminent," said he, "in the regions "of literature, I shall be yet more conspicuous in "any other place; if I should now devote myself "to study and retirement, I must pass my life in "silence, unacquainted with the delights of wealth, "the influence of power, the pomp of greatness, "and the charms of elegance, with all that man "envies and desires, with all that keeps the world "in motion, by the hope of gaining or the fear of "losing it. I will, therefore, depart to *Tauris*, where "the *Persian* monarch resides in all the splendor "of absolute dominion: my reputation will fly "before me, my arrival will be congratulated by "my kinsmen and friends; I shall see the eyes "of those who predicted my greatness sparkling with "exultation, and the faces of those that once "despised me clouded with envy, or counterfeiting "kindness by artificial smiles. I will show my wis-"dom by my discourse, and my moderation by my "silence; I will instruct the modest with easy "gentleness, and repress the ostentatious by season-"able superciliousness. My apartments will be

" crowded by the inquisitive and the vain, by those " that honour and those that rival me; my name " will soon reach the court; I shall stand before " the throne of the emperor; the judges of the law " will confess my wisdom, and the nobles will con- " tend to heap gifts upon me. If I shall find that my " merit, like that of others, excites malignity, or " feel myself tottering on the seat of elevation, I " may at last retire to academical obscurity, and " become, in my lowest state, a professor of *Bas-* " *sora.*"

Having thus settled his determination, he declared to his friends his design of visiting *Tauris*, and saw with more pleasure than he ventured to express, the regret with which he was dismissed. He could not bear to delay the honours to which he was destined, and therefore hastened away, and in a short time entered the capital of *Persia.* He was immediately immersed in the crowd, and passed unobserved to his father's house. He entered, and was received, though not unkindly, yet without any excess of fond- ness, or exclamations of rapture. His father had, in his absence, suffered many losses, and *Gelaleddin* was considered as an additional burthen to a falling family.

When he recovered from his surprise, he began to display his acquisitions, and practised all the arts of narration and disposition: but the poor have no lei- sure to be pleased with eloquence; they heard his ar- guments without reflection, and his pleasantries with- out a smile. He then applied himself singly to his brothers and sisters, but found them all chained down by invariable attention to their own fortunes, and insensible of any other excellence than that which could bring some remedy for indigence.

It was now known in the neighbourhood that *Gelaleddin* was returned, and he sat for some days

in expectation that the learned would visit him for consultation, or the great for entertainment. But who would be pleased or instructed in the mansions of poverty? He then frequented places of public resort, and endeavoured to attract notice by the copiousness of his talk. The sprightly were silenced, and went away to censure in some other place his arrogance and his pedantry; and the dull listened quietly for a while, and then wondered why any man should take pains to obtain so much knowledge which would never do him good.

He next solicited the viziers for employment, not doubting but his service would be eagerly accepted. He was told by one that there was no vacancy in his office; by another, that his merit was above any patronage but that of the emperor; by a third, that he would not forget him; and by the chief vizier, that he did not think literature of any great use in public business. He was sometimes admitted to their tables, where he exerted his wit and diffused his knowledge; but he observed, that where, by endeavour or accident, he had remarkably excelled, he was seldom invited a second time.

He now returned to *Bassora*, wearied and disgusted, but confident of resuming his former rank, and reveling again in satiety of praise. But he who had been neglected at *Tauris*, was not much regarded at *Bassora;* he was considered as a fugitive, who returned only because he could live in no other place; his companions found that they had formerly over-rated his abilities, and he lived long without notice or esteem.

N° 76. SATURDAY, SEPT. 29, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I WAS much pleased with your ridicule of those shallow critics, whose judgment, though often right as far as it goes, yet reaches only to inferior beauties, and who, unable to comprehend the whole, judge only by parts, and from thence determine the merit of extensive works. But there is another kind of critic still worse, who judges by narrow rules, and those too often false, and which, though they should be true, and founded on nature, will lead him but a very little way toward the just estimation of the sublime beauties in works of genius; for whatever part of an art can be executed or criticised by rules, that part is no longer the work of genius, which implies excellence out of the reach of rules. For my own part I profess myself an *Idler*, and love to give my judgment, such as it is, from my immediate perceptions, without much fatigue of thinking; and I am of opinion, that if a man has not those perceptions right, it will be vain for him to endeavour to supply their place by rules, which may enable him to talk more learnedly, but not to distinguish more acutely. Another reason which has lessened my affection for the study of criticism is, that critics, so far as I have observed, debar themselves from receiving any pleasure from the polite

arts, at the same time that they profess to love and admire them: for these rules, being always uppermost, give them such a propensity to criticise, that instead of giving up the reins of their imagination into their author's hands, their frigid minds are employed in examining whether the performance be according to the rules of art.

To those who are resolved to be critics in spite of nature, and at the same time have no great disposition to much reading and study, I would recommend to them to assume the character of connoisseur, which may be purchased at a much cheaper rate than that of a critic in poetry. The remembrance of a few names of painters, with their general characters with a few rules of the academy, which they may pick up among the painters, will go a great way towards making a very notable connoisseur.

With a gentleman of this cast, I visited last week the *Cartoons* at *Hampton-court;* he was just returned from *Italy*, a connoisseur of course, and of course his mouth full of nothing, but the grace of *Raffaelle*, the purity of *Dominichino*, the learning of *Poussin*, and the air of *Guido*, the greatness of taste of the *Carrachis*, and the sublimity and grand contorno of *Michael Angelo;* with all the rest of the cant of criticism, which he emitted with that volubility which generally those orators have who annex no ideas to their words.

As we were passing through the rooms, in our way to the gallery, I made him observe a whole length of *Charles* the First, by *Vandyke*, as a perfect representation of the character as well as the figure of the man. He agreed it was very fine, but it wanted spirit and contrast, and had not the flowing line, without which a figure could not possibly be graceful. When we entered the gallery, I

thought I could perceive him recollecting his rules by which he was to criticise *Raffaelle*. I shall pass over his observation of the boots being too little, and other criticisms of that kind, till we arrived at St. *Paul preaching*. "This," says he, "is esteemed the most excellent of all the *cartoons;* what "nobleness, what dignity there is in that figure of "St. *Paul!* and yet what an addition to that nobleness could *Raffaelle* have given, had the art of "contrast been known in his time! but, above all, "the flowing line, which constitutes grace and "beauty! You would not have then seen an upright figure standing equally on both legs, and "both hands stretched forward in the same direction, and his drapery, to all appearance, without "the least art of disposition." The following picture is the *Charge to Peter*. "Here," says he, "are "twelve upright figures; what a pity it is that *Raffaelle* was not acquainted with the pyramidal principle! He would then have contrived the figures "in the middle to have been on higher ground, or "the figures at the extremities stooping or lying, "which would not only have formed the group into "the shape of a pyramid, but likewise contrasted "the standing figures. Indeed," added he, "I have "often lamented that so great a genius as *Raffaelle* "had not lived in this enlightened age, since the art "has been reduced to principles, and had had his "education in one of the modern academies; what "glorious works might we then have expected from "his divine pencil!"

I shall trouble you no longer with my friend's observations, which, I suppose, you are now able to continue by yourself. It is curious to observe, that, at the same time that great admiration is pretended for a name of fixed reputation, objections are raised

against those very qualities by which that great name was acquired.

Those critics are continually lamenting that *Raffaelle* had not the colouring and harmony of *Rubens*, or the light and shadow of *Rembrant*, without considering how much the gay harmony of the former, and affectation of the latter, would take from the dignity of *Raffaelle;* and yet *Rubens* had great harmony, and *Rembrant* understood light and shadow: but what may be an excellence in a lower class of painting, becomes a blemish in a higher; as the quick, sprightly turn, which is the life and beauty of epigrammatic compositions, would but ill suit with the majesty of heroic poetry.

To conclude; I would not be thought to infer, from any thing that has been said, that rules are absolutely unnecessary; but to censure scrupulosity, a servile attention to minute exactness, which is sometimes inconsistent with higher excellency, and is lost in the blaze of expanded genius.

I do not know whether you will think painting a general subject. By inserting this letter, perhaps, you will incur the censure a man would deserve, whose business being to entertain a whole room, should turn his back to the company, and talk to a particular person.

I am, SIR, &c.

N° 77. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1759.

EASY poetry is universally admired; but I know not whether any rule has yet been fixed, by which it may be decided when poetry can be properly called easy. *Horace* has told us, that it is such as *every reader hopes to equal, but after long labour finds unattainable.* This is a very loose description, in which only the effect is noted; the qualities which produce this effect remain to be investigated.

Easy poetry is that in which natural thoughts are expressed without violence to the language. The discriminating character of ease consists principally in the diction; for all true poetry requires that the sentiments be natural. Language suffers violence by harsh or by daring figures, by transposition, by unusual acceptations of words, and by any licence which would be avoided by a writer of prose. Where any artifice appears in the construction of the verse, that verse is no longer easy. Any epithet which can be ejected without diminution of the sense, any curious iteration of the same word, and all unusual, though not ungrammatical structure of speech, destroy the grace of easy poetry.

The first lines of *Pope*'s Iliad afford examples of many licences which an easy writer must decline:

> *Achilles' wrath*, to Greece the *direful spring*
> Of woes unnumber'd, *heavenly* Goddess sing,
> The wrath which *hurl'd* to Pluto's *gloomy reign*
> The souls of *mighty* chiefs untimely slain.

In the first couplet the language is distorted by inversions, clogged with superfluities, and clouded by a harsh metaphor; and in the second there are two words used in an uncommon sense, and two epithets inserted only to lengthen the line; all these practices may in a long work easily be pardoned, but they always produce some degree of obscurity and ruggedness.

Easy poetry has been so long excluded by ambition of ornament, and luxuriance of imagery, that its nature seems now to be forgotten. Affectation, however opposite to ease, is sometimes mistaken for it: and those who aspire to gentle elegance, collect female phrases and fashionable barbarisms, and imagine that style to be easy which custom has made familiar. Such was the idea of the poet who wrote the following verses to a *countess cutting paper:*

Pollas grew *vap'rish once and odd,*
She would not *do the least right thing*
Either for goddess or for god,
Nor work, nor play, nor paint nor sing.

Jove frowned, and "Use," (he cry'd), "those eyes
"So skilful, and those hands so taper;
"Do something exquisite and wise."—
She bow'd, obey'd him, and cut paper.

This vexing him who gave her birth,
Thought by all heaven a *burning shame,*
What does she next, but bids on earth
Her *Burlington* do just the same!

Pallas, you give yourself *strange airs;*
But sure you'll find it hard to spoil
The sense and taste of one that bears
The name of *Saville* and of *Boyle.*

Alas! one bad example shown,
How quickly all the sex pursue!
See, madam! see the arts o'erthrown
Between *John Overton* and *you.*

It is the prerogative of easy poetry to be understood as long as the language lasts; but modes of speech, which owe their prevalence only to modish folly, or to the eminence of those that use them, die away with their inventors, and their meaning, in a few years, is no longer known.

Easy poetry is commonly sought in petty compositions upon minute subjects; but ease, though it excludes pomp, will admit greatness. Many lines in *Cato*'s soliloquy are at once easy and sublime:

> The divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man.
> ————If there is a power above us,
> And that there is all nature cries aloud
> Thro' all her works, he must delight in virtue,
> And that which he delights in must be happy.

Nor is ease more contrary to wit than to sublimity: the celebrated stanza of *Cowley*, on a lady elaborately dressed, loses nothing of its freedom by the spirit of the sentiment:

> Th' adorning thee with so much art
> Is but a barb'rous skill,
> 'Tis like the pois'ning of a dart,
> Too apt before to kill.

Cowley seems to have possessed the power of writing easily beyond any other of our poets; yet his pursuit of remote thoughts led him often into harshness of expression. *Waller* often attempted, but seldom attained it; for he is too frequently driven into transpositions. The poets, from the time of *Dryden*, have gradually advanced in embellishment, and consequently departed from simplicity and ease.

To require from any author many pieces of easy poetry, would be, indeed, to oppress him with too

hard a task. It is less difficult to write a volume of lines swelled with epithets, brightened by figures, and stiffened by transpositions, than to produce a few couplets graced only by naked elegance and simple purity, which require so much care and skill, that I doubt whether any of our authors have yet been able, for twenty lines together, nicely to observe the true definition of easy poetry.

N° 78. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1759.

I HAVE passed the summer in one of those places to which a mineral spring gives the idle and luxurious an annual reason for resorting, whenever they fancy themselves offended by the heat of *London*. What is the true motive of this periodical assembly I have never yet been able to discover. The greater part of the visitants neither feel diseases nor fear them. What pleasure can be expected, more than the variety of the journey, I know not, for the numbers are too great for privacy, and too small for diversion. As each is known to be a spy upon the rest, they all live in continual restraint; and having but a narrow range for censure, they gratify its cravings by preying on one another.

But every condition has some advantages. In this confinement a smaller circle affords opportunities for more exact observation. The glass that magnifies its object contracts the sight to a point; and the mind must be fixed upon a single character to remark its minute peculiarities. The quality or

habit which passes unobserved in the tumult of successive multitudes, becomes conspicuous when it is offered to the notice day after day; and perhaps I have, without any distinct notice, seen thousands like my late companions; for when the scene can be varied at pleasure, a slight disgust turns us aside before a deep impression can be made upon the mind.

There was a select set, supposed to be distinguished by superiority of intellects, who always passed the evening together. To be admitted to their conversation was the highest honour of the place; many youths aspired to distinction, by pretending to occasional invitations; and the ladies were often wishing to be men, that they might partake the pleasures of learned society.

I know not whether by merit or destiny, I was, soon after my arrival, admitted to this envied party, which I frequented till I had learned the art by which each endeavoured to support his character.

Tom Steady was a vehement assertor of uncontroverted truth; and by keeping himself out of the reach of contradiction had acquired all the confidence which the consciousness of irresistible abilities could have given. I was once mentioning a man of eminence, and after having recounted his virtues, endeavoured to represent him fully, by mentioning his faults. *Sir,* said Mr. *Steady, that he has faults I can easily believe, for who is without them? No man, Sir, is now alive, among the innumerable multitudes that swarm upon the earth, however wise, or however good, who has not, in some degree, his failings and his faults. If there be any man faultless, bring him forth into public view, show him openly, and let him be known; but I will venture to affirm, and, till the contrary be plainly shown, shall always maintain, that no such man is to be found.*

Tell not me, Sir, of impeccability and perfection; such talk is for those that are strangers in the world; I have seen several nations, and conversed with all ranks of people; I have known the great and the mean, the learned and the ignorant, the old and the young, the clerical and the lay; but I have never found a man without a fault; and I suppose shall die in the opinion, that to be human is to be frail.

To all this nothing could be opposed. I listened with a hanging head; Mr. *Steady* looked round on the hearers with triumph, and saw every eye congratulating his victory; he departed, and spent the next morning in following those who retired from the company, and telling them, with injunctions of secrecy, how poor *Sprightly* began to take liberties with men wiser than himself; but that he suppressed him by a decisive argument, which put him totally to silence.

Dick Snug is a man of sly remark and pithy sententiousness: he never immerges himself in the stream of conversation, but lies to catch his companions in the eddy: he is often very successful in breaking narratives, and confounding eloquence. A gentleman, giving the history of one of his acquaintance, made mention of a lady that had many lovers: *Then*, said *Dick, she was either handsome or rich.* This observation being well received, *Dick* watched the progress of the tale; and, hearing of a man lost in a shipwreck, remarked, that *no man was ever drowned upon dry land.*

Will Startle is a man of exquisite sensibility, whose delicacy of frame, and quickness of discernment, subject him to impressions from the slightest causes; and who, therefore, passes his life between rapture and horror, in quiverings of delight, or convulsions of disgust. His emotions are too violent for many words; his thoughts are always discovered by

exclamations. *Vile, odious, horrid, detestable,* and *sweet, charming, delightful, astonishing* compose almost his whole vocabulary, which he utters with various contortions and gesticulations, not easily related or described.

Jack Solid is a man of much reading, who utters nothing but quotations; but having been, I suppose, too confident of his memory, he has for some time neglected his books, and his stock grows every day more scanty. Mr. *Solid* has found an opportunity every night to repeat, from *Hudibras,*

> Doubtless the pleasure is as great
> Of being cheated, as to cheat;

and from *Waller,*

> Poets lose half the praise they would have got,
> Were it but known what they discretely blot.

Dick Misty is a man of deep research, and forcible penetration. Others are content with superficial appearances; but *Dick* holds, that there is no effect without a cause, and values himself upon his power of explaining the difficulty, and displaying the abstruse. Upon a dispute among us, which of two young strangers was more beautiful, *You,* says Mr. *Misty,* turning to me, *like* Amaranthia *better than* Chloris. *I do not wonder at the preference, for the cause is evident; there is in man a perception of harmony, and a sensibility of perfection, which touches the finer fibres of the mental texture; and before reason can descend from her throne, to pass her sentence upon the things compared, drives us towards the object proportioned to our faculties, by an impulse gentle, yet irresistible; for the harmonic system of the universe, and the reciprocal magnetism of similar natures, are always operating towards conformity and*

union; nor can the powers of the soul cease from agitation, till they find something on which they can repose. To this nothing was opposed; and *Amaranthia* was acknowledged to excel *Chloris*.

Of the rest you may expect an account from,

SIR, your's,

ROBIN SPRITELY.

N° 79. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

YOUR acceptance of a former letter on painting, gives me encouragement to offer a few more sketches on the same subject.

Amongst the painters and the writers on painting, there is one maxim universally admitted, and continually inculcated. *Imitate nature* is the invariable rule; but I know none who have explained in what manner this rule is to be understood; the consequence of which is, that every one takes it in the most obvious sense, that objects are represented naturally when they have such relief that they seem real. It may appear strange, perhaps, to hear this sense of the rule disputed; but it must be considered, that, if the excellence of a painter consisted only in this kind of imitation, painting must lose its rank,

and be no longer considered as a liberal art, and sister to poetry, this imitation being merely mechanical, in which the slowest intellect is always sure to succeed best; for the painter of genius cannot stoop to drudgery, in which the understanding has no part; and what pretence has the art to claim kindred with poetry, but by its powers over the imagination? To this power the painter of genius directs his aim; in this sense he studies nature, and often arrives at his end, even by being unnatural in the confined sense of the word.

The grand style of painting requires this minute attention to be carefully avoided, and must be kept as separate from it as the style of poetry from that of history. Poetical ornaments destroy that air of truth and plainness which ought to characterise history; but the very being of poetry consists in departing from this plain narration, and adopting every ornament that will warm the imagination. To desire to see the excellencies of each style united, to mingle the *Dutch* with the *Italian* school, is to join contrarieties which cannot subsist together, and which destroy the efficacy of each other. The *Italian* attends only to the invariable, the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature; the *Dutch*, on the contrary, to literal truth, and a minute exactness in the detail, as I may say of nature modified by accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the *Dutch* pictures, which, if we suppose it to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order, which ought to give place to a beauty of a superior kind, since one cannot be obtained but by departing from the other.

If my opinion was asked concerning the works of *Michael Angelo*, whether they would receive any advantage from possessing this mechanical merit, I

should not scruple to say they would not only receive no advantage, but would lose, in a great measure the effect which they now have on every mind susceptible of great and noble ideas. His works may be said to be all genius and soul; and why should they be loaded with heavy matter, which can only counteract his purpose by retarding the progress of the imagination?

If this opinion should be thought one of the wild extravagancies of enthusiasm, I shall only say, that those who censure it are not conversant in the works of the great masters. It is very difficult to determine the exact degree of enthusiasm that the arts of painting and poetry may admit. There may perhaps be too great an indulgence, as well as too great a restraint of imagination; and if the one produces incoherent monsters, the other produces what is full as bad, lifeless insipidity. An intimate knowledge of the passions, and good sense, but not common sense, must at last determine its limits. It has been thought, and I believe with reason, that *Michael Angelo* sometimes transgressed those limits; and I think I have seen figures of him of which it was very difficult to determine whether they were in the highest degree sublime or extremely ridiculous. Such faults may be said to be the ebullitions of genius; but at least he had this merit, that he never was insipid, and whatever passion his works may excite, they will always escape contempt.

What I have had under consideration is the sublimest style, particularly that of *Michael Angelo*, the *Homer* of painting. Other kinds may admit of this naturalness, which of the lowest kind is the chief merit; but in painting, as in poetry, the highest style has the least of common nature.

One may very safely recommend a little more enthusiasm to the modern painters; too much is cer-

tainly not the vice of the present age. The *Italians* seem to have been continually declining in this respect from the time of *Michael Angelo* to that of *Carlo Maratti*, and from thence to the very bathos of insipidity to which they are now sunk; so that there is no need of remarking, that where I mentioned the *Italian* painters in opposition to the *Dutch*, I mean not the moderns, but the heads of the old *Roman* and *Bolognian* schools; nor did I mean to include in my idea of an *Italian* painter, the *Venetian* school, which may be said to be the *Dutch* part of the *Italian* genius. I have only to add a word of advice to the painters, that however excellent they may be in painting naturally, they would not flatter themselves very much upon it; and to the connoisseurs, that when they see a cat or fiddle painted so finely, that as the phrase is, *It looks as if you could take it up*, they would not for that reason immediately compare the painter to *Raffaelle* and *Michael Angelo*.

N° 80. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1759.

THAT every day has its pains and sorrows is universally experienced, and almost universally confessed; but let us not attend only to mournful truths; if we look impartially about us, we shall find that every day has likewise its pleasures and its joys.

The time is now come when the town is again beginning to be full, and the rusticated beauty sees an end of her banishment. Those whom the tyranny of fashion had condemned to pass the summer among shades and brooks, are now preparing to return to

plays, balls, and assemblies, with health restored by retirement, and spirits kindled by expectation.

Many a mind, which has languished some months without emotion or desire, now feels a sudden renovation of its faculties. It was long ago observed by *Pythagoras*, that ability and necessity dwell near each other. She that wandered in the garden without sense of its fragrance, and lay day after day stretched upon a couch behind a green curtain, unwilling to wake, and unable to sleep, now summons her thoughts to consider which of her last year's clothes shall be seen again, and to anticipate the raptures of a new suit; the day and the night are now filled with occupation; the laces, which were too fine to be worn among rustics, are taken from the boxes and reviewed, and the eye is no sooner closed after its labours, than whole shops of silk busy the fancy.

But happiness is nothing if it is not known, and very little if it is not envied. Before the day of departure a week is always appropriated to the payment and reception of ceremonial visits, at which nothing can be mentioned but the delights of *London*. The lady who is hastening to the scene of action, flutters her wings, displays her prospect of felicity, tells how she grudges every moment of delay, and, in the presence of those whom she knows condemned to stay at home, is sure to wonder by what arts life can be made supportable through a winter in the country, and to tell how often, amidst the ecstasies of an opera, she shall pity those friends whom she has left behind. Her hope of giving pain is seldom disappointed: the affected indifference of one, the faint congratulations of another, the wishes of some openly confessed, and the silent dejection of the rest, all exalt her opinion of her own superiority.

But, however we may labour for our own deception, truth, though unwelcome, will sometimes in-

trude upon the mind. They who have already enjoyed the crowds and noise of the great city, know that their desire to return is little more than the restlessness of a vacant mind, that they are not so much led by hope as driven by disgust, and wish rather to leave the country than to see the town. There is commonly in every coach a passenger enwrapped in silent expectation, whose joy is more sincere, and whose hopes are more exalted. The virgin whom the last summer released from her governess, and who is now going between her mother and her aunt to try the fortune of her wit and beauty, suspects no fallacy in the gay representation. She believes herself passing into another world, and images *London* as an Elysian region, where every hour has its proper pleasure, where nothing is seen but the blaze of wealth, and nothing heard but merriment and flattery; where the morning always rises on a show, and the evening closes on a ball; where the eyes are used only to sparkle, and the feet only to dance.

Her aunt and her mother amuse themselves on the road, with telling her of dangers to be dreaded, and cautions to be observed. She hears them as they heard their predecessors, with incredulity or contempt. She sees that they have ventured and escaped; and one of the pleasures which she promises herself is, to detect their falsehoods, and be freed from their admonitions.

We are inclined to believe those whom we do not know, because they have never deceived us. The fair adventurer may perhaps listen to the *Idler*, whom she cannot suspect of rivalry or malice; yet he scarcely expects to be credited when he tells her, that her expectations will likewise end in disappointment.

The uniform necessities of human nature produce in a great measure uniformity of life, and for part of the day make one place like another; to dress and

undress, to eat and to sleep, are the same in *London* as in the country. The supernumerary hours have indeed a greater variety both of pleasure and of pain. The stranger, gazed on by multitudes at her first appearance in the Park, is perhaps on the highest summit of female happiness; but how great is the anguish when the novelty of another face draws her worshippers away! The heart may leap for a time under a fine gown; but the sight of a gown yet finer puts an end to rapture. In the first row at an opera, two hours may be happily passed in listening to the music on the stage, and watching the glances of the company; but how will the night end in despondency when she that imagined herself the sovereign of the place, sees lords contending to lead *Iris* to her chair! There is little pleasure in conversation to her whose wit is regarded but in the second place; and who can dance with ease or spirit that sees *Amaryllis* led out before her? She that fancied nothing but a succession of pleasures, will find herself engaged without design in numberless competitions, and mortified without provocation with numberless afflictions.

But I do not mean to extinguish that ardour which I wish to moderate, or to discourage those whom I am endeavouring to restrain. To know the world is necessary, since we were born for the help of one another; and to know it early is convenient, if it be only that we may learn early to despise it. She that brings to *London* a mind well prepared for improvement, though she misses her hope of uninterrupted happiness, will gain in return an opportunity of adding knowledge to vivacity, and enlarging innocence to virtue.

N° 81. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1759.

As the *English* army was passing towards *Quebec*, along a soft savanna between a mountain and a lake, one of the petty chiefs of the inland regions stood upon a rock surrounded by his clan, and from behind the shelter of the bushes contemplated the art and regularity of *European* war. It was evening, the tents were pitched: he observed the security with which the troops rested in the night, and the order with which the march was renewed in the morning. He continued to pursue them with his eye till they could be seen no longer, and then stood for some time silent and pensive.

Then turning to his followers, "My children," said he, "I have often heard from men hoary "with long life, that there was a time when our "ancestors were absolute lords of the woods, the "meadows, and the lakes, wherever the eye can "reach, or the foot can pass. They fished and "hunted, feasted and danced, and when they "were weary lay down under the first thicket, "without danger, and without fear. They changed "their habitations as the seasons required, con-"venience prompted, or curiosity allured them; "and sometimes gathered the fruits of the moun-"tain, and sometimes sported in canoes along the "coast.

"Many years and ages are supposed to have "been thus passed in plenty and security; when, "at last a new race of men entered our country

" from the great ocean. They inclosed themselves " in habitations of stone, which our ancestors " could neither enter by violence, nor destroy by " fire. They issued from those fastnesses, some- " times, covered like the armadillo with shells, " from which the lance rebounded on the striker, " and sometimes carried by mighty beasts which " had never been seen in our vales or forests, of " such strength and swiftness, that flight and op- " position were vain alike. Those invaders ranged " over the continent, slaughtering in their rage " those that resisted, and those that submitted, in " their mirth. Of those that remained, some were " buried in caverns, and condemned to dig metals " for their masters; some were employed in tilling " the ground, of which foreign tyrants devour the " produce; and, when the sword and the mines " have destroyed the natives, they supply their " place by human beings of another colour, brought " from some distant country to perish here under " toil and torture.

" Some there are who boast their humanity, and " content themselves to seize our chaces and " fisheries, who drive us from every track of ground " where fertility and pleasantness invite them to " settle, and make no war upon us except when we " intrude upon our own lands.

" Others pretend to have purchased a right of " residence and tyranny; but surely the insolence " of such bargains is more offensive than the avowed " and open dominion of force. What reward can in- " duce the possessor of a country to admit a stranger " more powerful than himself? Fraud or terror must " operate in such contracts; either they promised " protection which they never have afforded, or in- " struction which they never imparted. We hoped " to be secured by their favour from some other evil,

" or to learn the arts of *Europe*, by which we might " be able to secure ourselves. Their power they " never have exerted in our defence, and their arts " they have studiously concealed from us. Their " treaties are only to deceive, and their traffic only " to defraud us. They have a written law among " them, of which they boast as derived from Him " who made the earth and sea, and by which they " profess to believe that man will be made happy " when life shall forsake him. Why is not this law " communicated to us? It is concealed because it " is violated. For how can they preach it to an " *Indian* nation, when I am told that one of its first " precepts forbids them to do to others what they " would not that others should do to them?

" But the time perhaps is now approaching when " the pride of usurpation shall be crushed, and the " cruelties of invasion shall be revenged. The sons " of rapacity have now drawn their swords upon each " other, and referred their claims to the decision of " war; let us look unconcerned upon the slaughter, " and remember that the death of every *European* " delivers the country from a tyrant and a robber; " for what is the claim of either nation, but the claim " of the vulture to the leveret, of the tiger to the " fawn? Let them then continue to dispute their " title to regions which they cannot people, to " purchase by danger and blood the empty dignity " of dominion over mountains which they will never " climb, and rivers which they will never pass. Let " us endeavour, in the mean time, to learn their dis- " cipline, and to forge their weapons; and, when they " shall be weakened with mutual slaughter, let us " rush down upon them, force their remains to take " shelter in their ships, and reign once more in our " native country."

N° 82. SATURDAY, NOV. 10, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

DISCOURSING in my last letter on the different practice of the *Italian and Dutch* painters, I observed, that "the *Italian* painter attends only to the "invariable, the great and general ideas which are "fixed and inherent in universal nature."

I was led into the subject of this letter by endeavouring to fix the original cause of this conduct of the *Italian* masters. If it can be proved that by this choice they selected the most beautiful part of the creation, it will show how much their principles are founded on reason, and, at the same time, discover the origin of our ideas of beauty.

I suppose it will be easily granted, that no man can judge whether any animal be beautiful in its kind, or deformed, who has seen only one of that species; that is as conclusive in regard to the human figure; so that if a man, born blind, was to recover his sight, and the most beautiful woman was brought before him, he could not determine whether she was handsome or not; nor, if the most beautiful and most deformed were produced, could he any better determine to which he should give the preference, having seen only those two. To distinguish beauty, then, implies the having seen many individuals of that species. If it is asked, how is

more skill acquired by the observation of greater numbers? I answer, that, in consequence of having seen many, the power is acquired, even without seeking after it, of distinguishing between accidental blemishes and excrescences which are continually varying the surface of Nature's works, and the invariable general form which nature most frequently produces, and always seems to intend in her productions.

Thus amongst the blades of grass or leaves of the same tree, though no two can be found exactly alike, yet the general form is invariable: A naturalist, before he chose one as a sample, would examine many, since, if he took the first that occurred, it might have, by accident or otherwise, such a form as that it would scarcely be known to belong to that species; he selects, as the painter does, the most beautiful, that is, the most general form of nature.

Every species of the animal as well as the vegetable creation may be said to have a fixed or determinate form towards which nature is continually inclining, like various lines terminating in the centre; or it may be compared to pendulums vibrating in different directions over one central point, and as they all cross the centre, though only one passes through any other point, so it will be found that perfect beauty is oftener produced by nature than deformity; I do not mean than deformity in general, but than any one kind of deformity. To instance in a particular part of a feature: the line that forms the ridge of the nose is beautiful when it is straight; this then is the central form, which is oftener found than either concave, convex, or any other irregular form that shall be proposed. As we are then more accustomed to beauty than deformity, we may conclude that to be the reason why we approve and

admire it, as we approve and admire customs and fashions of dress for no other reason than that we are used to them, so that though habit and custom cannot be said to be the cause of beauty, it is certainly the cause of our liking it; and I have no doubt but that, if we were more used to deformity than beauty, deformity would then lose the idea now annexed to it, and take that of beauty; as, if the whole world should agree that *yes* and *no* should change their meanings, *yes* would then deny, and *no* would affirm.

Whoever undertakes to proceed further in this argument, and endeavours to fix a general criterion of beauty respecting different species, or to show why one species is more beautiful than another, it will be required from him first to prove that one species is really more beautiful than another. That we prefer one to the other, and with very good reason, will be readily granted; but it does not follow from thence that we think it more a beautiful form; for we have no criterion of form by which to determine our judgment. He who says a swan is more beautiful than a dove, means little more than that he has more pleasure in seeing a swan than a dove, either from the stateliness of its motions, or its being a more rare bird; and he who gives the preference to the dove, does it from some association of ideas of innocence that he always annexes to the dove; but, if he pretends to defend the preference he gives to one or the other by endeavouring to prove that this more beautiful form proceeds from a particular gradation of magnitude, undulation of a curve, or direction of a line, or whatever other conceit of his imagination he shall fix on as a criterion of form, he will be continually contradicting himself, and find at last that the great Mother of Nature will not be subjected to such narrow rules. Among the various

reasons why we prefer one part of her works to another, the most general, I believe, is habit and custom; custom makes, in a certain sense, white black, and black white; it is custom alone determines our preference of the colour of the *Europeans* to the *Æthiopians;* and they, for the same reason, prefer their own colour to ours. I suppose nobody will doubt, if one of their painters were to paint the goddess of beauty, but that he would represent her black, with thick lips, flat nose, and woolly hair; and, it seems to me, he would act very unnaturally if he did not; for by what criterion will any one dispute the propriety of his idea? We, indeed, say, that the form and colour of the *European* is preferable to that of the *Æthiopian;* but I know of no reason we have for it, but that we are more accustomed to it. It is absurd to say, that beauty is possessed of attractive powers, which irresistibly seize the corresponding mind with love and admiration, since that argument is equally conclusive in the favour of the white and the black philosopher.

The black and white nations must, in respect of beauty, be considered as of different kinds, at least a different species of the same kind; from one of which to the other, as I observed, no inference can be drawn.

Novelty is said to be one of the causes of beauty; that novelty is a very sufficient reason why we should admire, is not denied; but because it is uncommon, is it therefore beautiful? The beauty that is produced by colour, as when we prefer one bird to another, though of the same form, on account of its colour, has nothing to do with this argument, which reaches only to form. I have here considered the word *beauty* as being properly applied to form alone. There is a necessity of fixing this confined sense; for their can be no argument, if the sense of

the word is extended to every thing that is approved. A rose may as well be said to be beautiful because it has a fine smell, as a bird because of its colour. When we apply the word *beauty* we do not mean always by it a more beautiful form, but something valuable on account of its rarity, usefulness, colour, or any other property. A horse is said to be a beautiful animal; but, had a horse as few good qualities as a tortoise, I do not imagine that he would be then esteemed beautiful.

A fitness to the end proposed, is said to be another cause of beauty; but supposing we were proper judges of what form is the most proper in an animal to constitute strength or swiftness, we always determine concerning its beauty, before we exert our understanding to judge of its fitness.

From what has been said, it may be inferred, that the works of nature, if we compare one species with another, are all equally beautiful; and that preference is given from custom, or some association of ideas; and that, in creatures of the same species, beauty is the medium or centre of all various forms.

To conclude, then, by way of corollary; if it has been proved, that the painter, by attending to the invariable and general ideas of nature, produces beauty, he must, by regarding minute particularities and accidental discriminations, deviate from the universal rule, and pollute his canvass with deformity.

N° 83 SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I SUPPOSE you have forgotten that many weeks ago I promised to send you an account of my companions at the Wells. You would not deny me a place among the most faithful votaries of idleness, if you knew how often I have recollected my engagement, and contented myself to delay the performance for some reason which I durst not examine because I knew it to be false; how often I have sat down to write and rejoiced at interruption; and how often I have praised the dignity of resolution, determined at night to write in the morning, and deferred it in the morning to the quiet hours of night.

I have at last begun what I have long wished at an end, and find it more easy than I expected to continue my narration.

Our assembly could boast no such constellation of intellects as *Clarendon*'s band of associates. We had among us no *Selden*, *Falkland*, or *Waller;* but we had men not less important in their own eyes, though less distinguished by the public; and many a time have we lamented the partiality of mankind, and agreed that men of the deepest inquiry sometimes let their discoveries die away in silence, that the most comprehensive observers have seldom op-

portunities of imparting their remarks, and that modest merit passes in the crowd unknown and unheeded.

One of the greatest men of the society was SIM SCRUPLE, who lives in a continual equipoise of doubt, and is a constant enemy to confidence and dogmatism. *Sim*'s favourite topic of conversation is, the narrowness of the human mind, the fallaciousness of our senses, the prevalence of early prejudice, and the uncertainty of appearances. *Sim* has many doubts about the nature of death, and is sometimes inclined to believe that sensation may survive motion, and that a dead man may feel though he cannot stir. He has sometimes hinted that man might perhaps have been naturally a quadruped; and thinks it would be very proper, that at the Foundling Hospital some children should be inclosed in an apartment in which the nurses should be obliged to walk half upon four and half upon two, that the younglings, being bred without the prejudice of example, might have no other guide than nature, and might at last come forth into the world as genius should direct, erect or prone, on two legs or on four.

The next in dignity of mien and fluency of talk was DICK WORMWOOD, whose sole delight is, to find every thing wrong. *Dick* never enters a room but he shows that the door and the chimney are ill-placed. He never walks into the fields but he finds ground ploughed which is fitter for pasture. He is always an enemy to the present fashion. He holds that all the beauty and virtue of women will soon be destroyed by the use of tea. He triumphs when he talks on the present system of education, and tells us with great vehemence, that we are learning words when we should learn things. He is of opinion that we suck in errors at the nurse's breast

and thinks it extremely ridiculous that children should be taught to use the right hand rather than the left.

Bob Sturdy considers it as a point of honour to say again what he has once said, and wonders how any man that has been known to alter his opinion, can look his neighbours in the face. *Bob* is the most formidable disputant of the whole company; for without troubling himself to search for reasons, he tires his antagonist with repeated affirmations. When *Bob* has been attacked for an hour with all the powers of eloquence and reason, and his position appears to all but himself utterly untenable, he always closes the debate with his first declaration, introduced by a stout preface of contemptuous civility. "All this is very judicious; "you may talk, Sir, as you please; but I will still "say what I said at first." *Bob* deals much in universals, which he has now obliged us to let pass without exceptions. He lives on an annuity, and holds that *there are as many thieves as traders;* he is of loyalty unshaken, and always maintains, that *he who sees a Jacobite sees a rascal.*

Phil Gentle is an enemy to the rudeness of contradiction and the turbulence of debate. *Phil* has no notions of his own, and therefore willingly catches from the last speaker such as he shall drop. This inflexibility of ignorance is easily accommodated to any tenet; his only difficulty is, when the disputants grow zealous, how to be of two contrary opinions at once. If no appeal is made to his judgment, he has the art of distributing his attention and his smiles in such a manner, that each thinks him of his own party; but if he is obliged to speak, he then observes that the question is difficult; that he never received so much pleasure from a debate before; that neither of the controvertists

could have found his match in any other company; that Mr. *Wormwood*'s assertion is very well supported, and yet there is great force in what Mr. *Scruple* advanced against it. By this indefinite declaration both are commonly satisfied; for he that has prevailed is in good humour; and he that has felt his own weakness is very glad to have escaped so well.

I am, SIR, your's, &c.

ROBIN SPRITELY.

N°84. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1759.

BIOGRAPHY is, of the various kind of narrative writing, that which is most eagerly read, and most easily applied to the purposes of life.

In romances, when the wide field of possibility lies open to invention, the incidents may easily be made more numerous, the vicissitudes more sudden, and the events more wonderful; but from the time of life when fancy begins to be over-ruled by reason and corrected by experience, the most artful tale raises little curiosity when it is known to be false; though it may, perhaps, be sometimes read as a model of a neat or elegant style, not for the sake of knowing what it contains, but how it is written; or those that are weary of themselves, may have recourse to it as a pleasing dream, of which, when they awake, they voluntarily dismiss the mages from their minds.

The examples and events of history press, indeed, upon the mind with the weight of truth; but when they are reposited in the memory, they are oftener employed for show than use, and rather diversify conversation than regulate life. Few are engaged in such scenes as give them opportunities of growing wiser by the downfal of statesmen or the defeat of generals. The stratagems of war and the intrigues of courts, are read by far the greater part of mankind with the same indifference as the adventures of fabled heroes, or the revolutions of a fairy region. Between falsehood and useless truth there is little difference. As gold which he cannot spend will make no man rich, so knowledge which he cannot apply will make no man wise.

The mischievous consequences of vice and folly, of irregular desires and predominant passions, are best discovered by those relations which are levelled with the general surface of life, which tell not how any man became great, but how he was made happy; not how he lost the favour of his prince, but how he became discontented with himself.

Those relations are therefore commonly of most value in which the writer tells his own story. He that recounts the life of another commonly dwells most upon conspicuous events, lessens the familiarity of his tale to increase its dignity, shows his favourite at a distance decorated and magnified like the ancient actors in their tragic dress, and endeavours to hide the man that he may produce a hero.

But if it be true, which was said by a *French* prince, *That no man was a hero to the servants of his chamber*, it is equally true that every man is yet less a hero to himself. He that is most elevated above the crowd by the importance of his employments, or the reputation of his genius, feels himself

affected by fame or business but as they influence his domestic life. The high and low, as they have the same faculties and the same senses, have no less similitude in their pains and pleasures. The sensations are the same in all, though produced by very different occasions. The prince feels the same pain when an invader seizes a province, as the farmer when a thief drives away his cow. Men thus equal in themselves will appear equal in honest and impartial biography; and those whom fortune or nature place at the greatest distance, may afford instruction to each other.

The writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of an historian, the knowledge of the truth; and though it may be plausibly objected that his temptations to disguise it are equal to his opportunities of knowing it, yet I cannot but think that impartiality may be expected with equal confidence from him that relates the passages of his own life, as from him that delivers the transactions of another.

Certainty of knowledge not only excludes mistake, but fortifies veracity. What we collect by conjecture, and by conjecture only can one man judge of another's motives or sentiments, is easily modified by fancy or by desire; as objects imperfectly discerned take forms from the hope or fear of the beholder. But that which is fully known cannot be falsified but with reluctance of understanding, and alarm of conscience: of understanding, the lover of truth; of conscience, the sentinel of virtue.

He that writes the life of another is either his friend or his enemy, and wishes either to exalt his praise or aggravate his infamy: many temptations to falsehood will occur in the disguise of passions, too specious to fear much resistance. Love of

virtue will animate panegyric, and hatred of wickedness imbitter censure. The zeal of gratitude, the ardour of patriotism, fondness for an opinion, or fidelity to a party, may easily overpower the vigilance of a mind habitually well disposed, and prevail over unassisted and unfriended veracity.

But he that speaks of himself has no motive to falsehood or partiality except self-love, by which all have so often been betrayed, that all are on the watch against its artifices. He that writes an apology for a single action, to confute an accusation, to recommend himself to favour, is indeed always to be suspected of favouring his own cause; but he that sits down calmly and voluntarily to review his life for the admonition of posterity, or to amuse himself, and leaves this account unpublished, may be commonly presumed to tell truth, since falsehood cannot appease his own mind, and fame will not be heard beneath the tomb.

N° 85. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1759.

One of the peculiarities which distinguish the present age is the multiplication of books. Every day brings new advertisements of literary undertakings, and we are flattered with repeated promises of growing wise on easier terms than our progenitors.

How much either happiness or knowledge is advanced by this multitude of authors, it is not very easy to decide.

He that teaches us any thing which we knew not before, is undoubtedly to be reverenced as a master.

He that conveys knowledge by more pleasing ways, may very properly be loved as a benefactor; and he that supplies life with innocent amusement, will be certainly caressed as a pleasing companion.

But few of those who fill the world with books have any pretensions to the hope either of pleasing or instructing. They have often no other task than to lay two books before them, out of which they compile a third, without any new materials of their own, and with very little application of judgment to those which former authors have supplied.

That all compilations are useless I do not assert. Particles of science are often very widely scattered. Writers of extensive comprehension have incidental remarks upon topics very remote from the principal subject, which are often more valuable than formal treatises, and which yet are not known because they are not promised in the title. He that collects those under proper heads is very laudably employed, for though he exerts no great abilities in the work, he facilitates the progress of others, and by making that easy of attainment which is already written, may give some mind, more vigorous or more adventurous than his own, leisure for new thoughts and original designs.

But the collections poured lately from the press have been seldom made at any great expense of time or inquiry, and therefore only serve to distract choice without supplying any real want.

It is observed that *a corrupt society has many laws*: I know not whether it is not equally true, that *an ignorant age has many books*. When the treasures of ancient knowledge lie unexamined, and original authors are neglected and forgotten, compilers and plagiaries are encouraged, who give us again what

we had before, and grow great by setting before us what our own sloth had hidden from our view.

Yet are not even these writers to be indiscriminately censured and rejected. Truth like beauty varies its fashions, and is best recommended by different dresses to different minds; and he that recalls the attention of mankind to any part of learning which time has left behind it, may be truly said to advance the literature of his own age. As the manners of nations vary, new topics of persuasion become necessary, and new combinations of imagery are produced; and he that can accommodate himself to the reigning taste, may always have readers who perhaps would not have looked upon better performances.

To exact of every man who writes, that he should say something new, would be to reduce authors to a small number; to oblige the most fertile genius to say only what is new would be to contract his volumes to a few pages. Yet, surely, there ought to be some bounds to repetition; libraries ought no more to be heaped for ever with the same thoughts differently expressed, than with the same books differently decorated.

The good or evil which these secondary writers produce, is seldom of any long duration. As they owe their existence to change of fashion, they commonly disappear when a new fashion becomes prevalent. The authors that in any nation last from age to age are very few, because there are very few that have any other claim to notice than that they catch hold on present curiosity, and gratify some accidental desire, or produce some temporary conveniency.

But however the writers of the day may despair of future fame, they ought at least to forbear any present mischief. Though they cannot arrive at

eminent heights of excellence, they might keep themselves harmless. They might take care to inform themselves before they attempt to inform others, and exert the little influence which they have for honest purposes.

But such is the present state of our literature, that the ancient sage, who thought *a great book a great evil*, would now think the multitude of books a multitude of evils. He would consider a bulky writer who engrossed a year, and a swarm of pamphleteers who stole each an hour, as equal wasters of human life, and would make no other difference between them, than between a beast of prey and a flight of locusts.

N° 86. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I AM a young lady newly married to a young gentleman. Our fortune is large, our minds are vacant, our dispositions gay, our acquaintances numerous, and our relations splendid. We considered that marriage, like life, has its youth; that the first year is the year of gaiety and revel, and resolved to see the shows and feel the joys of *London* before the increase of our family should confine us to domestic cares and domestic pleasures.

Little time was spent in preparation; the coach

was harnessed, and a few days brought us to *London*, and we alighted at a lodging provided for us by Miss *Biddy Trifle*, a maiden niece of my husband's father, where we found apartments on a second floor, which my cousin told us would serve us till we could please ourselves with a more commodious and elegant habitation, and which she had taken at a very high price, because it was not worth the while to make a hard bargain for so short a time.

Here I intended to lie concealed till my new clothes were made, and my new lodging hired; but Miss *Trifle* had so industriously given notice of our arrival to all her acquaintance, that I had the mortification next day of seeing the door thronged with painted coaches and chairs with coronets, and was obliged to receive all my husband's relations on a second floor.

Inconveniences are often balanced by some advantage: the elevation of my apartments furnished a subject for conversation, which, without some such help we should have been in danger of wanting. Lady *Stately* told us how many years had passed since she climbed so many steps. Miss *Airy* ran to the window, and thought it charming to see the walkers so little in the street; and Miss *Gentle* went to try the same experiment, and screamed to find herself so far above the ground.

They all knew that we intended to remove, and therefore all gave me advice about a proper choice. One street was recommended for the purity of its air, another for its freedom from noise, another for its nearness to the park, another because there was but a step from it to all places of diversion, and another, because its inhabitants enjoyed at once the town and country.

I had civility enough to hear every recommendation with a look of curiosity while it was made, and

of acquiescence when it was concluded, but in my heart felt no other desire than to be free from the disgrace of a second floor, and cared little where I should fix, if the apartments were spacious and splendid.

Next day a chariot was hired, and Miss *Trifle* was dispatched to find a lodging. She returned in the afternoon, with an account of a charming place, to which my husband went in the morning to make the contract. Being young and unexperienced, he took with him his friend *Ned Quick*, a gentleman of great skill in rooms and furniture, who sees, at a single glance, whatever there is to be commended or censured. Mr. *Quick*, at the first view of the house, declared that it could not be inhabited, for the sun in the afternoon shone with full glare on the windows of the dining room.

Miss *Trifle* went out again and soon discovered another lodging, which Mr. *Quick* went to survey, and found, that, whenever the wind should blow from the east, all the smoke of the city would be driven upon it.

A magnificent set of rooms was then found in one of the streets near *Westminster-Bridge*, which Miss *Trifle* preferred to any which she had yet seen; but Mr. *Quick*, having mused upon it for a time, concluded that it would be too much exposed in the morning to the fogs that rise from the river.

Thus Mr. *Quick* proceeded to give us every day new testimonies of his taste and circumspection; sometimes the street was too narrow for a double range of coaches; sometimes it was an obscure place, not inhabited by persons of quality. Some places were dirty, and some crowded; in some houses the furniture was ill-suited, and in others the stairs were too narrow. He had such fertility of objections that

Miss *Trifle* was at last tired, and desisted from all attempts for our accommodation.

In the mean time I have still continued to see my company on a second floor, and am asked twenty times a day when I am to leave those odious lodgings, in which I live tumultuously without pleasure, and expensively without honour. My husband thinks so highly of Mr. *Quick*, that he cannot be persuaded to remove without his approbation; and Mr. *Quick* thinks his reputation raised by the multiplication of difficulties.

In this distress to whom can I have recourse? I find my temper vitiated by daily disappointment, by the sight of pleasure which I cannot partake, and the possession of riches which I cannot enjoy. Dear Mr. *Idler*, inform my husband that he is trifling away, in superfluous vexation, the few months which custom has appropriated to delight; that matrimonial quarrels are not easily reconciled between those that have no children; that wherever we settle he must always find some inconvenience; but nothing is so much to be avoided as a perpetual state of inquiry and suspense.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

Peggy Heartless.

N° 87. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1759.

Of what we know not, we can only judge by what we know. Every novelty appears more wonderful as it is more remote from any thing with which experience or testimony have hitherto acquainted us; and if it passes farther beyond the notions that we have been accustomed to form, it becomes at last incredible.

We seldom consider that human knowledge is very narrow, that national manners are formed by chance, that uncommon conjunctures of causes produce rare effects, or that what is impossible at one time or place may yet happen in another. It is always easier to deny than to inquire. To refuse credit confers for a moment an appearance of superiority, which every little mind is tempted to assume when it may be gained so cheaply as by withdrawing attention from evidence, and declining the fatigue of comparing probabilities. The most pertinacious and vehement demonstrator may be wearied in time by continual negation; and incredulity, which an old poet, in his address to *Raleigh*, calls *the wit of fools*, obtunds the argument which it cannot answer, as woolsacks deaden arrows though they cannot repel them.

Many relations of travellers have been slighted as fabulous, till more frequent voyages have confirmed their veracity; and it may reasonably be imagined, that many ancient historians are unjustly suspected of falsehood, because our own times afford nothing that resembles what they tell.

Had only the writers of antiquity informed us that there was once a nation in which the wife lay down upon the burning pile only to mix her ashes with those of her husband, we should have thought it a tale to be told with that of *Endymion*'s commerce with the Moon. Had only a single traveller related that many nations of the earth were black, we should have thought the accounts of the *Negros* and of the *Phœnix* equally credible. But of black men the numbers are too great who are now repining under *English* cruelty, and the custom of voluntary cremation is not yet lost among the ladies of *India*.

Few narratives will either to men or women appear more incredible than the histories of the *Amazons;* of female nations of whose constitution it was the essential and fundamental law, to exclude men from all participation either of public affairs or domestic business; where female armies marched under female captains, female farmers gathered the harvest, female partners danced together, and female wits diverted one another.

Yet several ages of antiquity have transmitted accounts of the *Amazons* of *Caucasus;* and of the *Amazons* of *America*, who have given their name to the greatest river in the world. *Condamine* lately found such memorials, as can be expected among erratic and unlettered nations, where events are recorded only by tradition, and new swarms settling in the country from time to time, confuse and efface all traces of former times.

To die with husbands, or to live without them, are the two extremes which the prudence and moderation of *European* ladies have, in all ages, equally declined; they have never been allured to death by the kindness or civility of the politest nations, nor has the roughness and brutality of more savage countries ever provoked them to doom their male

associates to irrevocable banishment. The *Bohemian* matrons are said to have made one short struggle for superiority, but instead of banishing the men, they contented themselves with condemning them to servile offices; and their constitution thus left imperfect, was quickly overthrown.

There is, I think, no class of *English* women from whom we are in any danger of *Amazonian* usurpation. The old maids seem nearest to independence, and most likely to be animated by revenge against masculine authority; they often speak of men with acrimonious vehemence, but it is seldom found that they have any settled hatred against them, and it is yet more rarely observed that they have any kindness for each other. They will not easily combine in any plot; and if they should ever agree to retire and fortify themselves in castles or in mountains, the sentinel will betray the passes in spite and the garrison will capitulate upon easy terms, if the besiegers have handsome sword-knots, and are well supplied with fringe and lace.

The gamesters, if they were united, would make a formidable body; and since they consider men only as beings that are to lose their money, they might live together without any wish for the officiousness of gallantry, or the delights of diversified conversation. But as nothing would hold them together but the hope of plundering one another, their government would fail from the defect of its principles, the men would need only to neglect them, and they would perish in a few weeks by a civil war.

I do not mean to censure the ladies of *England* as defective in knowledge or in spirit, when I suppose them unlikely to revive the military honours of their sex. The character of the ancient *Amazons* was

rather terrible than lovely; the hand could not be very delicate that was only employed in drawing the bow and brandishing the battle axe; their power was maintained by cruelty, their courage was deformed by ferocity, and their example only shows that men and women live best together.

N°88. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1759.

When the philosophers of the last age were first congregated into the Royal Society, great expectations were raised of the sudden progress of useful arts; the time was supposed to be near, when engines should turn by a perpetual motion, and health be secured by the universal medicine; when learning should be facilitated by a real character, and commerce extended by ships which could reach their ports in defiance of the tempest.

But improvement is naturally slow. The Society met and parted without any visible diminution of the miseries of life. The gout and stone were still painful, the ground that was not ploughed brought no harvest, and neither oranges nor grapes would grow upon the hawthorn. At last, those who were disappointed began to be angry; those likewise who hated innovation were glad to gain an opportunity of ridiculing men who had depreciated, perhaps with too much arrogance, the knowledge of antiquity. And it appears from some of their earliest apologies, that the philosophers felt with great sensibility the

unwelcome importunities of those who were daily asking, "What have ye done?"

The truth is, that little had been done compared with what fame had been suffered to promise; and the question could only be answered by general apologies and by new hopes, which, when they were frustrated, gave a new occasion to the same vexatious inquiry.

This fatal question has disturbed the quiet of many other minds. He that in the latter part of his life too strictly inquires what he has done, can very seldom receive from his own heart such an account as will give him satisfaction.

We do not indeed so often disappoint others as ourselves. We not only think more highly than others of our own abilities, but allow ourselves to form hopes which we never communicate, and please our thoughts with employments which none ever will allot us, and with elevations to which we are never expected to rise; and when our days and years have passed away in common business or common amusements, and we find at last that we have suffered our purposes to sleep till the time of action is past, we are reproached only by our own reflections; neither our friends nor our enemies wonder that we live and die like the rest of mankind; that we live without notice, and die without memorial; they know not what task we had proposed, and therefore cannot discern whether it is finished.

He that compares what he has done with what he has left undone, will feel the effect which must always follow the comparison of imagination with reality; he will look with contempt on his own unimportance, and wonder to what purpose he came into the world; he will repine that he shall leave behind him no evidence of his having been, that he has added nothing to the system of life, but has

glided from youth to age among the crowd, without any effort for distinction.

Man is seldom willing to let fall the opinion of his own dignity, or to believe that he does little only because every individual is a very little being. He is better content to want diligence than power, and sooner confesses the depravity of his will than the imbecility of his nature.

From this mistaken notion of human greatness it proceeds, that many who pretend to have made great advances in wisdom so loudly declare that they despise themselves. If I had ever found any of the self-contemners much irritated or pained by the consciousness of their meanness, I should have given them consolation by observing, that a little more than nothing is as much as can be expected from a being, who with respect to the multitudes about him is himself little more than nothing. Every man is obliged by the Supreme Master of the universe to improve all the opportunities of good which are afforded him, and to keep in continual activity such abilities as are bestowed upon him. But he has no reason to repine, though his abilities are small and his opportunities few. He that has improved the virtue, or advanced the happiness of one fellow-creature, he that has ascertained a single moral proposition, or added one useful experiment to natural knowledge, may be contented with his own performance, and, with respect to mortals like himself, may demand, like *Augustus*, to be dismissed at his departure with applause.

N° 89. SATURDAY, DEC. 29, 1759.

Ανέχε και ἀπέχε.

EPICT.

How evil came into the world—for what reason it is that life is overspread with such boundless varieties of misery—why the only thinking being of this globe is doomed to think, merely to be wretched, and to pass his time from youth to age in fearing or in suffering calamities, is a question which philosophers have long asked, and which philosophy could never answer.

Religion informs us that misery and sin were produced together. The depravation of human will was followed by a disorder of the harmony of nature; and by that Providence which often places antidotes in the neighbourhood of poisons, vice was checked by misery, lest it should swell to universal and unlimited dominion.

A state of innocence and happiness is so remote from all that we have ever seen, that though we can easily conceive it possible, and may therefore hope to attain it, yet our speculations upon it must be general and confused. We can discover that where there is universal innocence, there will probably be universal happiness; for why should afflictions be permitted to infest beings who are not in danger of corruption from blessings, and where there is no use of terror nor cause of punishment? But in a world like ours, where our senses assault us, and our hearts betray us, we should pass on from crime to crime, heedless and remorseless, if misery

did not stand in our way, and our own pains admonish us of our folly.

Almost all the moral good which is left among us, is the apparent effect of physical evil.

Goodness is divided by divines into soberness, righteousness, and godliness. Let it be examined how each of these duties would be practised if there were no physical evil to enforce it.

Sobriety, or temperance, is nothing but the forbearance of pleasure; and if pleasure was not followed by pain, who would forbear it? We see every hour those in whom the desire of present indulgence overpowers all sense of past and all foresight of future misery. In a remission of the gout, the drunkard returns to his wine, and the glutton to his feast; and if neither disease nor poverty were felt or dreaded, every one would sink down in idle sensuality, without any care of others, or of himself. To eat and drink, and lie down to sleep, would be the whole business of mankind.

Righteousness, or the system of social duty, may be subdivided into justice and charity. Of justice one of the Heathen sages has shown, with great acuteness, that it was impressed upon mankind only by the inconveniences which injustice had produced. "In the first ages," says he, "men acted "without any rule but the impulse of desire; they "practised injustice upon others, and suffered it "from others in their turn; but in time it was "discovered, that the pain of suffering wrong was "greater than the pleasure of doing it; and man-"kind, by a general compact, submitted to the "restraint of laws, and resigned the pleasure to "escape the pain."

Of charity it is superfluous to observe, that it could have no place if there were no want; for of a virtue which could not be practised, the omission

could not be culpable. Evil is not only the occasional but the efficient cause of charity; we are incited to the relief of misery by the consciousness that we have the same nature with the sufferer, that we are in danger of the same distresses, and may sometimes implore the same assistance.

Godliness, or piety, is elevation of the mind towards the Supreme Being, and extension of the thoughts to another life. The other life is future, and the Supreme Being is invisible. None would have recourse to an invisible power, but that all other subjects had eluded their hopes. None would fix their attention upon the future, but that they are discontented with the present. If the senses were feasted with perpetual pleasure, they would always keep the mind in subjection. Reason has no authority over us, but by its power to warn us against evil.

In childhood, while our minds are yet unoccupied, religion is impressed upon them, and the first years of almost all who have been well educated are passed in a regular discharge of the duties of piety. But as we advance forward into the crowds of life, innumerable delights solicit our inclinations, and innumerable cares distract our attention; the time of youth is passed in noisy frolics; manhood is led on from hope to hope, and from project to project; the dissoluteness of pleasure, the inebriation of success, the ardour of expectation, and the vehemence of competition, chain down the mind alike to the present scene, nor is it remembered how soon this mist of trifles must be scattered, and the bubbles that float upon the rivulet of life be lost for ever in the gulph of eternity. To this consideration scarcely any man is awakened but by some pressing and resistless evil. The death of those from whom he derived his pleasures, or to whom he destined his

possessions, some disease which shows him the vanity of all external acquisitions, or the gloom of age, which intercepts his prospects of long enjoyment, forces him to fix his hopes upon another state, and when he has contended with the tempests of life till his strength fails him, he flies at last to the shelter of religion.

That misery does not make all virtuous, experience too clearly informs us; but it is no less certain that of what virtue there is, misery produces far the greater part. Physical evil may be, therefore, endured with patience, since it is the cause of moral good; and patience itself is one virtue by which we are prepared for that state in which evil shall be no more.

N° 90. SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 1760.

It is a complaint which has been made from time to time, and which seems to have lately become more frequent, that *English* oratory, however forcible in argument, or elegant in expression, is deficient and inefficacious, because our speakers want the grace and energy of action.

Among the numerous projectors who are desirous to refine our manners, and improve our faculties, some are willing to supply the deficiency of our speakers. We have had more than one exhortation to study the neglected art of moving the passions, and have been encouraged to believe that our

tongues, however feeble in themselves, may, by the help of our hands and legs, obtain an uncontrollable dominion over the most stubborn audience, animate the insensible, engage the careless, force tears from the obdurate, and money from the avaricious.

If by slight of hand, or nimbleness of foot, all these wonders can be performed, he that shall neglect to attain the free use of his limbs may be justly censured as criminally lazy. But I am afraid that no specimen of such effects will easily be shown. If I could once find a speaker in *'Change Alley* raising the price of stocks by the power of persuasive gestures, I should very zealously recommend the study of his art; but having never seen any action by which language was much assisted, I have been hitherto inclined to doubt whether my countrymen are not blamed too hastily for their calm and motionless utterance.

Foreigners of many nations accompany their speech with action: but why should their example have more influence upon us than ours upon them? Customs are not to be changed but for better. Let those who desire to reform us show the benefits of the change proposed. When the *Frenchman* waves his hands, and writhes his body, in recounting the revolutions of a game at cards, or the *Neapolitan*, who tells the hour of the day, shows upon his fingers, the number which he mentions, I do not perceive that their manual exercise is of much use, or that they leave any image more deeply impressed by their bustle and vehemence of communication.

Upon the *English* stage there is no want of action but the difficulty of making it at once various and proper, and its perpetual tendency to become ridiculous, notwithstanding all the advantages which

art and show, and custom and prejudice can give it, may prove how little it can be admitted into any other place, where it can have no recommendation but from truth and nature.

The use of *English* oratory is only at the bar, in the parliament, and in the church. Neither the judges of our laws, nor the representatives of our people, would be much affected by laboured gesticulation, or believe any man the more because he rolled his eyes, or puffed his cheeks, or spread abroad his arms, or stamped the ground, or thumped his breast, or turned his eyes sometimes to the ceiling, and sometimes to the floor. Upon men intent only upon truth, the arm of an orator has little power; a credible testimony, or a cogent argument, will overcome all the art of modulation, and all the violence of contortion.

It is well known that, in the city, which may be called the parent of oratory, all the arts of mechanical persuasion were banished from the court of supreme judicature. The judges of the *Areopagus* considered action and vociferation as a foolish appeal to the external senses, and unworthy to be practised before those who had no desire of idle amusement, and whose only pleasure was to discover right.

Whether action may not be yet of use in churches, where the preacher addresses a mingled audience, may deserve inquiry. It is certain that the senses are more powerful as the reason is weaker; and that he whose ears convey little to his mind, may sometimes listen with his eyes till truth may gradually take possession of his heart. If there be any use of gesticulation, it must be applied to the ignorant and rude, who, will be more affected by vehemence than delighted by propriety. In the pulpit little action can be proper, for action can

illustrate nothing but that to which it may be referred by nature or by custom. He that imitates by his hand a motion which he describes, explains it by natural similitude; he that lays his hand on his breast, when he expresses pity, enforces his words by a customary allusion. But theology has few topics to which action can be appropriated; that action which is vague and indeterminate will at last settle into habit, and habitual peculiarities are quickly ridiculous.

It is, perhaps, the character of the *English*, to despise trifles; and that art may surely be accounted a trifle which is at once useless and ostentatious, which can seldom be practised with propriety, and which, as the mind is more cultivated, is less powerful. Yet as all innocent means are to be used for the propagation of truth, I would not deter those who are employed in preaching to common congregations from any practice which they may find persuasive; for, compared with the conversion of sinners, propriety and elegance are less than nothing.

N° 91. SATURDAY, JAN. 12, 1760.

It is common to overlook what is near, by keeping the eye fixed upon something remote. In the same manner present opportunities are neglected, and attainable good is slighted, by minds busied in extensive ranges, and intent upon future advantages. Life, however short, is made still shorter by waste of

time, and its progress towards happiness, though naturally slow, is yet retarded by unnecessary labour.

The difficulty of obtaining knowledge is universally confessed. To fix deeply in the mind the principles of science, to settle their limitations, and deduce the long succession of their consequences; to comprehend the whole compass of complicated systems, with all the arguments, objections, and solutions, and to reposite in the intellectual treasury the numberless facts, experiments, apophthegms, and positions, which must stand single in the memory, and of which none has any perceptible connexion with the rest, is a task which, though undertaken with ardour, and pursued with diligence, must at last be left unfinished by the frailty of our nature.

To make the way to learning either less short or less smooth, is certainly absurd; yet this is the apparent effect of the prejudice which seems to prevail among us in favour of foreign authors, and of the contempt of our native literature, which this excursive curiosity must necessarily produce. Every man is more speedily instructed by his own language, than by any other; before we search the rest of the world for teachers, let us try whether we may not spare our trouble by finding them at home.

The riches of the *English* language are much greater than they are commonly supposed. Many useful and valuable books lie buried in shops and libraries, unknown and unexamined, unless some lucky compiler opens them by chance, and finds an easy spoil of wit and learning. I am far from intending to insinuate that other languages are not necessary to him who aspires to eminence, and whose whole life is devoted to study; but to him

who reads only for amusement, or whose purpose is not to deck himself with the honours of literature, but to be qualified for domestic usefulness, and sit down content with subordinate reputation, we have authors sufficient to fill up all the vacancies of his time, and gratify most of his wishes for information.

Of our poets, I need say little, because they are perhaps, the only authors to whom their country has done justice. We consider the whole succession from *Spenser* to *Pope*, as superior to any names which the Continent can boast; and therefore the poets of other nations, however familiarly they may be sometimes mentioned, are very little read, except by those who design to borrow their beauties.

There is, I think, not one of the liberal arts which may not be competently learned in the *English* language. He that searches after mathematical knowledge may busy himself among his own countrymen, and will find one or other able to instruct him in every part of those abstruse sciences. He that is delighted with experiments, and wishes to know the nature of bodies from certain and visible effects, is happily placed where the mechanical philosophy was first established by a public institution, and from which it was spread to all other countries.

The more airy and elegant studies of philology and criticism have little need of any foreign help. Though our language, not being very analogical, gives few opportunities for grammatical researches, yet we have not wanted authors who have considered the principles of speech; and with critical writings we abound sufficiently to enable pedantry to impose rules which can seldom be observed, and vanity to talk of books which are seldom read.

But our own language has, from the Reformation to the present time, been chiefly dignified and adorned by the works of our divines, who, considered as commentators, controvertists, or preachers, have undoubtedly left all other nations far behind them. No vulgar language can boast such treasures of theological knowledge, or such multitudes of authors at once learned, elegant, and pious. Other countries, and other communions, have authors perhaps equal in abilities, and diligence to ours; but if we unite number with excellence, there is certainly no nation which must not allow us to be superior. Of morality little is necessary to be said, because it is comprehended in practical divinity, and is, perhaps, better taught in *English* sermons than in any other books ancient and modern. Nor shall I dwell on our excellence in metaphysical speculations, because he that reads the works of our divines will easily discover how far human subtilty has been able to penetrate.

Political knowledge is forced upon us by the form of our constitution; and all the mysteries of government are discovered in the attack or defence of every minister. The original law of society, the rights of subjects, and the prerogatives of kings, have been considered with the utmost nicety, sometimes profoundly investigated, and sometimes familiarly explained.

Thus copiously instructive is the *English* language; and thus needless is all recourse to foreign writers. Let us not, therefore, make our neighbours proud by soliciting help which we do not want, nor discourage our own industry by difficulties which we need not suffer.

N° 92. SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1760.

WHATEVER is useful or honourable will be desired by many who never can obtain it; and that which cannot be obtained when it is desired, artifice or folly will be diligent to counterfeit. Those to whom fortune has denied gold and diamonds, decorate themselves with stones and metals, which have something of the show, but little of the value; and every moral excellence, or intellectual faculty, has some vice or folly which imitates its appearance.

Every man wishes to be wise, and they who cannot be wise are almost always cunning. The less is the real discernment of those whom business or conversation brings together, the more illusions are practised, nor is caution ever so necessary as with associates or opponents of feeble minds.

Cunning differs from wisdom as twilight from open day. He that walks in the sunshine goes boldly forward by the nearest way; he sees that where the path is straight and even he may proceed in security, and where it is rough and crooked he easily complies with the turns, and avoids the obstructions. But the traveller in the dusk fears more as he sees less; he knows there may be danger, and therefore suspects that he is never safe, tries every step before he fixes his foot, and shrinks at every noise, lest violence should approach him. Wisdom comprehends at once the end and the means, estimates easiness or difficulty, and is cautious or confident in due proportion. Cunning discovers little at a time, and has no other means of certainty

than multiplication of stratagems and superfluity of suspicion. The man of cunning always considers that he can never be too safe, and therefore always keeps himself enveloped in a mist, impenetrable, as he hopes, to the eye of rivalry or curiosity.

Upon this principle *Tom Double* has formed a habit of eluding the most harmless question. What he has no inclination to answer, he pretends sometimes not to hear, and endeavours to divert the inquirer's attention by some other subject; but if he be pressed hard by repeated interrogation, he always evades a direct reply. Ask him whom he likes best on the stage; he is ready to tell that there are several excellent performers. Inquire when he was last at the coffee-house; he replies, that the weather has been bad lately. Desire him to tell the age of any of his acquaintance; he immediately mentions another who is older or younger.

Will Puzzle values himself upon a long reach. He foresees every thing before it will happen, though he never relates his prognostications till the event is past. Nothing has come to pass for these twenty years of which Mr. *Puzzle* had not given broad hints, and told at least that it was not proper to tell. Of those predictions, which every conclusion will equally verify, he always claims the credit, and wonders that his friends did not understand them. He supposes very truly, that much may be known which he knows not, and therefore pretends to know much of which he and all mankind are equally ignorant. I desired his opinion, yesterday, of the *German* war, and was told, that if the *Prussians* were well supported, something great may be expected; but that they have very powerful enemies to encounter; that the *Austrian* general has long experience, and the *Russians* are hardy and resolute; but that no human power is invincible. I

then drew the conversation to our own affairs, and invited him to balance the probabilities of war and peace. He told me that war requires courage, and negotiation judgment, and that the time will come when it will be seen whether our skill in treaty is equal to our bravery in battle. To this general prattle he will appeal hereafter, and will demand to have his foresight applauded, whoever shall at last be conquered or victorious.

With *Ned Smuggle* all is a secret. He believes himself watched by observation and malignity on every side, and rejoices in the dexterity by which he has escaped snares that never were laid. *Ned* holds that a man is never deceived if he never trusts, and therefore will not tell the name of his taylor or his hatter. He rides out every morning for the air, and pleases himself with thinking that nobody knows where he has been. When he dines with a friend, he never goes to his house the nearest way, but walks up a bye street to perplex the scent. When he has a coach called, he never tells him at the door the true place to which he is going, but stops him in the way, that he may give him directions where nobody can hear him. The price of what he buys or sells is always concealed. He often takes lodgings in the country by a wrong name, and thinks that the world is wondering where he can be hid. All these transactions he registers in a book, which, he says, will some time or other amaze posterity.

It is remarked by *Bacon*, that many men try to procure reputation only by objections, of which, if they are once admitted, the nullity never appears, because the design is laid aside. *This false feint of wisdom*, says he, *is the ruin of business*. The whole power of cunning is privative; to say nothing, and to do nothing, is the utmost of its reach. Yet men thus narrow by nature, and mean by art, are some-

times able to rise by the miscarriages of bravery and the openness of integrity; and by watching failures, and snatching opportunities, obtain advantages which belong properly to higher characters.

N° 93. SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1760.

SAM SOFTLY was bred a sugar-baker; but succeeding to a considerable estate on the death of his elder brother, he retired early from business, married a fortune, and settled in a country house near *Kentish-town*. *Sam*, who formerly was a sportsman, and in his apprenticeship used to frequent *Barnet* races, keeps a high chaise, with a brace of seasoned geldings. During the summer months the principal passion and employment of *Sam*'s life is to visit, in this vehicle, the most eminent seats of the nobility and gentry in different parts of the kingdom, with his wife and some select friends. By these periodical excursions *Sam* gratifies many important purposes. He assists the several pregnancies of his wife; he shows his chaise to the best advantage; he indulges his insatiable curiosity for finery, which, since he has turned gentleman, has grown upon him to an extraordinary degree; he discovers taste and spirit; and, what is above all, he finds frequent opportunities of displaying to the party, at every house he sees, his knowledge of family connexions. At first *Sam* was contented with driving a friend between *London* and his villa. Here he prided himself in pointing out the boxes of the

citizens on each side of the road, with an accurate detail of their respective failures or successes in trade; and harangued on the several equipages that were accidentally passing. Here, too, the seats interspersed on the surrounding hills, afforded ample matter for *Sam*'s curious discoveries. For one, he told his companion, a rich *Jew* had offered money; and that a retired widow was courted at another, by an eminent dry-salter. At the same time he discussed the utility, and enumerated the expenses, of the *Islington* turnpike. But *Sam*'s ambition is at present raised to nobler undertakings.

When the happy hour of the annual expedition arrives, the seat of the chaise is furnished with *Ogilvy's Book of Roads*, and a choice quantity of cold tongues. The most alarming disaster which can happen to our hero, who thinks he *throws a whip* admirably well, is to be overtaken in a road which affords no *quarter* for wheels. Indeed, few men possess more skill or discernment for concerting and conducting a *party of pleasure*. When a seat is to be surveyed, he has a peculiar talent in selecting some shady bench in the park, where the company may most commodiously refresh themselves with cold tongue, chicken, and *French* rolls; and is very sagacious in discovering what cool temple in the garden will be best adapted for drinking tea, brought for this purpose, in the afternoon, and from which the chaise may be resumed with the greatest convenience. In viewing the house itself, he is principally attracted by the chairs and beds, concerning the cost of which his minute inquiries generally gain the clearest information. An agate table easily diverts his eyes from the most capital strokes of *Rubens*, and a *Turkey* carpet has more charms than a *Titian*. *Sam*, however, dwells with some attention on the family portraits, particularly the most

modern ones; and as this is a topic on which the house-keeper usually harangues in a more copious manner, he takes this opportunity of improving his knowledge of intermarriages. Yet, notwithstanding this appearance of satisfaction, *Sam* has some objection to all he sees. One house has too much gilding; at another, the chimney-pieces are all monuments; at a third, he conjectures that the beautiful canal must certainly be dried up in a hot summer. He despises the statues at *Wilton*, because he thinks he can see much better carving at *Westminster* Abbey. But there is one general objection which he is sure to make at almost every house, particularly at those which are most distinguished. He allows that all the apartments are extremely fine, but adds, with a sneer, that they are too fine to be inhabited.

Misapplied genius most commonly proves ridiculous. Had *Sam*, as Nature intended, contentedly continued in the calmer and less conspicuous pursuits of sugar-baking, he might have been a respectable and useful character. At present he dissipates his life in a specious idleness, which neither improves himself nor his friends. Those talents which might have benefited society, he exposes to contempt by false pretensions. He affects pleasures which he cannot enjoy, and is acquainted only with those subjects on which he has no right to talk, and which it is no merit to understand.

N° 94. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1760.

It is common to find young men ardent and diligent in the pursuit of knowledge; but the progress of life very often produces laxity and indifference; and not only those who are at liberty to choose their business and amusements, but those likewise whose professions engage them in literary inquiries pass the latter part of their time without improvement, and spend the day rather in any other entertainment than that which they might find among their books.

This abatement of the vigour of curiosity is sometimes imputed to the insufficiency of learning. Men are supposed to remit their labours, because they find their labours to have been vain; and to search no longer after truth and wisdom, because they at last despair of finding them.

But this reason is for the most part very falsely assigned. Of learning, as of virtue, it may be affirmed, that it is at once honoured and neglected. Whoever forsakes it will for ever look after it with longing, lament the loss which he does not endeavour to repair, and desire the good which he wants resolution to seize and keep. The *Idler* never applauds his own idleness, nor does any man repent of the diligence of his youth.

So many hindrances may obstruct the acquisition of knowledge, that there is little reason for wondering that it is in a few hands. To the greater part of mankind the duties of life are inconsistent with much study; and the hours which they would spend

upon letters must be stolen from their occupations and their families. Many suffer themselves to be lured by more sprightly and luxurious pleasures from the shades of contemplation, where they find seldom more than a calm delight, such as though greater than all others, its certainty and its duration being reckoned with its power of gratification, is yet easily quitted for some extemporary joy, which the present moment offers, and another, perhaps, will put out of reach.

It is the great excellence of learning, that it borrows very little from time or place; it is not confined to season or to climate, to cities or to the country, but may be cultivated and enjoyed where no other pleasure can be obtained. But this quality, which constitutes much of its value, is one occasion of neglect; what may be done at all times with equal propriety, is deferred from day to day, till the mind is gradually reconciled to the omission, and the attention is turned to other objects. Thus habitual idleness gains too much power to be conquered, and the soul shrinks from the idea of intellectual labour and intenseness of meditation.

That those who profess to advance learning sometimes obstruct it, cannot be denied; the continual multiplication of books not only distracts choice, but disappoints inquiry. To him that has moderately stored his mind with images, few writers afford any novelty; or what little they have to add to the common stock of learning, is so buried in the mass of general notions, that like silver mingled with the ore of lead, it is too little to pay for the labour of separation; and he that has often been deceived by the promise of a title, at last grows weary of examining, and is tempted to consider all as equally fallacious.

There are, indeed, some repetitions always lawful,

because they never deceive. He that writes the history of past times, undertakes only to decorate known facts by new beauties of method or style, or at most to illustrate them by his own reflections. The author of a system, whether moral or physical, is obliged to nothing beyond care of selection and regularity of disposition. But there are others who claim the name of authors merely to disgrace it, and fill the world with volumes only to bury letters in their own rubbish. The traveller who tells, in a pompous folio, that he saw the *Pantheon* at *Rome*, and the *Medicean Venus* at *Florence;* the natural historian, who, describing the productions of a narrow island, recounts all that it has in common with every other part of the world; the collector of antiquities, that accounts every thing a curiosity which the ruins of *Herculaneum* happen to emit, though an instrument already shown in a thousand repositories, or a cup common to the ancients, the moderns, and all mankind, may be justly censured as the persecutors of students, and the thieves of that time which never can be restored.

N° 95. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1760.

TO THE IDLER.

MR. IDLER;

It is, I think, universally agreed, that seldom any good is gotten by complaint; yet we find that few forbear to complain but those who are afraid of being reproached as the authors of their own miseries. I hope, therefore, for the common permission to lay my case before you and your readers, by which I shall disburthen my heart, though I cannot hope to receive either assistance or consolation.

I am a trader, and owe my fortune to frugality and industry. I began with little; but by the easy and obvious method of spending less than I gain, I have every year added something to my stock, and expect to have a seat in the common-council, at the next election.

My wife, who was as prudent as myself, died six years ago, and left me one son and one daughter, for whose sake I resolved never to marry again, and rejected the overtures of Mrs. *Squeeze*, the broker's widow, who had ten thousand pounds at her own disposal.

I bred my son at a school near *Islington;* and when he had learned arithmetic, and wrote a good hand, I took him into the shop, designing, in about

ten years, to retire to *Stratford* or *Hackney*, and leave him established in the business.

For four years he was diligent and sedate, entered the shop before it was opened, and when it was shut always examined the pins of the window. In any intermission of business it was his constant practice to peruse the ledger. I had always great hopes of him, when I observed how sorrowfully he would shake his head over a bad debt, and how eagerly he would listen to me when I told him that he might at one time or other become an alderman.

We lived together with mutual confidence, till unluckily a visit was paid him by two of his school-fellows who were placed, I suppose, in the army, because they were fit for nothing better: they came glittering in their military dress, accosted their old acquaintance, and invited him to a tavern, where, as I have been since informed, they ridiculed the meanness of commerce, and wondered how a youth of spirit could spend the prime of his life behind a counter.

I did not suspect any mischief. I knew my son was never without money in his pocket, and was better able to pay his reckoning than his companions; and expected to see him return triumphing in his own advantages, and congratulating himself that he was not one of those who expose their heads to a musquet bullet for three shillings a day.

He returned sullen and thoughtful; I supposed him sorry for the hard fortune of his friends; and tried to comfort him by saying that the war would soon be at an end, and that, if they had any honest occupation, half pay would be a pretty help. He looked at me with indignation; and snatching up his candle, told me, as he went up stairs, that *he hoped to see a battle yet.*

Why he should hope to see a battle I could not

conceive, but let him go quietly to sleep away his folly. Next day he made two mistakes in the first bill, disobliged a customer by surly answers, and dated all his entries in the journal in a wrong month. At night he met his military companions again, came home late, and quarrelled with the maid.

From this fatal interview he has gradually lost all his laudable passions and desires. He soon grew useless in the shop, where, indeed, I did not willingly trust him any longer; for he often mistook the price of goods to his own loss, and once gave a promissory note instead of a receipt.

I did not know to what degree he was corrupted, till an honest taylor gave me notice that he had bespoke a laced suit, which was to be left for him at a house kept by the sister of one of my journeymen. I went to this clandestine lodging, and found, to my amazement, all the ornaments of a fine gentleman, which he has taken upon credit, or purchased with money subducted from the shop.

This detection has made him desperate. He now openly declares his resolution to be a gentleman; says that his soul is too great for a counting-house; ridicules the conversation of city taverns; talks of new plays, and boxes, and ladies; gives duchesses for his toasts; carries silver, for readiness, in his waistcoat-pocket; and comes home at night in a chair, with such thunders at the door as have more than once brought the watchmen from their stands.

Little expenses will not hurt us; and I could forgive a few juvenile frolics, if he would be careful of the main; but his favourite topic is contempt of money, which, he says, is of no use but to be spent. Riches, without honour, he holds empty things; and once told me to my face, that wealthy plodders were only purveyors to men of spirit.

He is always impatient in the company of his old friends, and seldom speaks till he is warmed with wine; he then entertains us with accounts that we do not desire to hear, of intrigues among lords and ladies, and quarrels between officers of the guards; shows a miniature on his snuff-box, and wonders that any man can look upon the new dancer without rapture.

All this is very provoking; and yet all this might be borne, if the boy could support his pretensions. But, whatever he may think, he is yet far from the accomplishments which he has endeavoured to purchase at so dear a rate. I have watched him in public places. He sneaks in like a man that knows he is where he should not be; he is proud to catch the slightest salutation, and often claims it when it is not intended. Other men receive dignity from dress, but my booby looks always more meanly for his finery. Dear Mr. *Idler*, tell him what must at last become of a fop, whom pride will not suffer to be a trader, and whom long habits in a shop forbid to be a gentleman.

I am, Sir, &c.

Tim Wainscot.

N° 96. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1760.

HACHO, a king of *Lapland*, was in his youth the most renowned of the Northern warriors. His martial achievements remain engraved on a pillar of flint in the rocks of *Hanga*, and are to this day solemnly carolled to the harp by the *Laplanders*, at the fires with which they celebrate their nightly festivities. Such was his intrepid spirit, that he ventured to pass the lake *Vether* to the isle of *Wizards*, where he descended alone into the dreary vault in which a magician had been kept bound for six ages, and read the *Gothic* characters inscribed on his brazen mace. His eye was so piercing, that, as ancient chronicles report, he could blunt the weapons of his enemies only by looking at them. At twelve years of age he carried an iron vessel of a prodigious weight, for the length of five furlongs, in the presence of all the chiefs of his father's castle.

Nor was he less celebrated for his prudence and wisdom. Two of his proverbs are yet remembered and repeated among *Laplanders*. To express the vigilance of the Supreme Being, he was wont to say, *Odin's belt is always buckled*. To show that the most prosperous condition of life is often hazardous, his lesson was, *When you slide on the smoothest ice, beware of pits beneath*. He consoled his countrymen, when they were once preparing to leave the frozen desarts of *Lapland*, and resolved to seek some warmer climate, by telling

them, that the Eastern nations, notwithstanding their boasted fertility, passed every night amidst the horrors of anxious apprehension, and were inexpressibly affrighted, and almost stunned, every morning, with the noise of the sun while he was rising.

His temperance and severity of manners were his chief praise. In his early years he never tasted wine; nor would he drink out of a painted cup. He constantly slept in his armour, with his spear in his hand; nor would he use a battle-ax whose handle was inlaid with brass. He did not, however, persevere in this contempt of luxury; nor did he close his days with honour.

One evening, after hunting the *Gulos*, or wild dog, being bewildered in a solitary forest, and having passed the fatigues of the day without any interval of refreshment, he discovered a large store of honey in the hollow of a pine. This was a dainty which he had never tasted before; and being at once faint and hungry, he fed greedily upon it. From this unusual and delicious repast he received so much satisfaction, that, at his return home, he commanded honey to be served up at his table every day. His palate, by degrees, became refined and vitiated; he began to lose his native relish for simple fare, and contracted a habit of indulging himself in delicacies; he ordered the delightful gardens of his castle to be thrown open, in which the most luscious fruits had been suffered to ripen and decay, unobserved and untouched, for many revolving autumns, and gratified his appetite with luxurious desserts. At length he found it expedient to introduce wine, as an agreeable improvement; or a necessary ingredient to his new way of living; and having once tasted it, he was tempted, by little

and little, to give a loose to the excesses of intoxication. His general simplicity of life was changed; he perfumed his apartments by burning the wood of the most aromatic fir, and commanded his helmet to be ornamented with beautiful rows of the teeth of the rein-deer. Indolence and effeminacy stole upon him by pleasing and imperceptible gradations, relaxed the sinews of his resolution, and extinguished his thirst of military glory.

While *Hacho* was thus immersed in pleasure and in repose, it was reported to him, one morning, that the preceding night, a disastrous omen had been discovered, and that bats and hideous birds had drank up the oil which nourished the perpetual lamp in the temple of *Odin*. About the same time, a messenger arrived to tell him, that the king of *Norway* had invaded his kingdom with a formidable army. *Hacho*, terrified as he was with the omen of the night, and enervated with indulgence, rouzed himself from his voluptuous lethargy, and recollecting some faint and few sparks of veteran valour, marched forward to meet him. Both armies joined battle in the forest where *Hacho* had been lost after hunting; and it so happened, that the king of *Norway* challenged him to single combat, near the place where he had tasted the honey. The *Lapland* chief, languid and long disused to arms, was soon overpowered; he fell to the ground; and before his insulting adversary struck his head from his body, uttered this exclamation, which the *Laplanders* still use as an early lesson to their children: "The vicious "man should date his destruction from the first "temptation. How justly do I fall a sacrifice to sloth "and luxury, in the place where I first yielded to "those allurements which seduced me to deviate from

" temperance and innocence! the honey which I " tasted in this forest, and not the hand of the king " of *Norway*, conquers *Hacho*."

N° 97. SATURDAY, FEB. 23, 1760.

It may, I think, be justly observed, that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travellers. One part of mankind is naturally curious to learn the sentiments, manners, and condition of the rest; and every mind that has leisure or power to extend its views, must be desirous of knowing in what proportion Providence has distributed the blessings of nature, or the advantages of art, among the several nations of the earth.

This general desire easily procures readers to every book from which it can expect gratification. The adventurer upon unknown coasts, and the describer of distant regions, is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions; but when the volume is opened, nothing is found but such general accounts as leave no distinct idea behind them, or such minute enumerations as few can read with either profit or delight.

Every writer of travels should consider, that, like all other authors, he undertakes either to instruct or please, or to mingle pleasure with instruction. He that instructs, must offer to the mind something to be imitated, or something to be avoided; he that pleases

must offer new images to his reader, and enable him to form a tacit comparison of his own state with that of others.

The greater part of travellers tell nothing, because their method of travelling supplies them with nothing to be told. He that enters a town at night and surveys it in the morning, and then hastens away to another place, and guesses at the manners of the inhabitants by the entertainment which his inn afforded him, may please himself for a time with a hasty change of scenes, and a confused remembrance of palaces and churches; he may gratify his eye with a variety of landscapes, and regale his palate with a succession of vintages: but let him be contented to please himself without endeavouring to disturb others. Why should he record excursions by which nothing could be learned, or wish to make a show of knowledge, which, without some power of intuition unknown to other mortals, he never could attain?

Of those who crowd the world with their itineraries, some have no other purpose than to describe the face of the country; those who sit idle at home, and are curious to know what is done or suffered in distant countries, may be informed by one of these wanderers, that on a certain day he set out early with the caravan, and in the first hour's march saw, towards the south, a hill covered with trees, then passed over a stream, which ran northward with a swift course, but which is probably dry in the summer months; that an hour after he saw something to the right which looked at a distance like a castle with towers, but which he discovered afterward to be a craggy rock; that he then entered a valley, in which he saw several trees tall and flourishing, watered by a rivulet not marked in the maps, of which

he was not able to learn the name; that the road afterward grew stony, and the country uneven, where he observed among the hills many hollows worn by torrents, and was told that the road was passable only part of the year; that going on they found the remains of a building, once, perhaps a fortress to secure the pass, or to restrain the robbers, of which the present inhabitants can give no other account than that it is haunted by fairies; that they went to dine at the foot of a rock, and travelled the rest of the day along the banks of a river, from which the road turned aside towards evening, and brought them within sight of a village, which was once a considerable town, but which afforded them neither good victuals nor commodious lodging.

Thus he conducts his reader through wet and dry, over rough and smooth, without incidents, without reflection: and, if he obtains his company for another day, will dismiss him again at night, equally fatigued with a like succession of rocks and streams, mountains and ruins.

This is the common style of those sons of enterprise, who visit savage countries, and range through solitude and desolation; who pass a desart, and tell that it is sandy; who cross a valley, and find that it is green. There are others of more delicate sensibility, that visit only the realms of elegance and softness; that wander through *Italian* palaces, and amuse the gentle reader with catalogues of pictures; that hear masses in magnificent churches, and recount the number of the pillars or variegations of the pavement. And there are yet others, who, in disdain of trifles, copy inscriptions elegant and rude, ancient and modern; and transcribe into their book the walls of every edifice, sacred or civil. He that reads these books must consider his labour as its own reward; for

he will find nothing on which attention can fix, or which memory can retain.

He that would travel for the entertainment of others, should remember that the great object of remark is human life. Every nation has something particular in its manufactures, its works of genius, its medicines, its agriculture, its customs, and its policy. He only is a useful traveller, who brings home something by which his country may be benefitted; who procures some supply of want, or some mitigation of evil, which may enable his readers to compare their condition with that of others, to improve it whenever it is worse, and whenever it is better to enjoy it.

N° 98. SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1760.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

I AM the daughter of a gentleman, who during his life-time enjoyed a small income which arose from a pension from the court, by which he was enabled to live in a genteel and comfortable manner.

By the situation of life in which he was placed, he was frequently introduced into the company of those of much greater fortunes than his own, among whom he was always received with complaisance, and treated with civility.

At six years of age I was sent to a boarding-school

in the country, at which I continued till my father's death. This melancholy event happened at a time when I was by no means of a sufficient age to manage for myself, while the passions of youth continued unsubdued, and before experience could guide my sentiments or my actions.

I was then taken from school by an uncle, to the care of whom my father had committed me on his dying bed. With him I lived several years; and as he was unmarried, the management of his family was committed to me. In this character I always endeavoured to acquit myself, if not with applause, at least without censure.

At the age of twenty-one, a young gentleman of some fortune paid his addresses to me, and offered me terms of marriage. This proposal I should readily have accepted, because from vicinity of residence, and from many opportunities of observing his behaviour, I had in some sort contracted an affection for him. My uncle, for what reason I do not know, refused his consent to this alliance, though it would have been complied with by the father of the young gentleman; and as the future condition of my life was wholly dependant on him, I was not willing to disoblige him, and therefore, though unwillingly, declined the offer.

My uncle, who possessed a plentiful fortune, frequently hinted to me in conversation, that at his death I should be provided for in such a manner that I should be able to make my future life comfortable and happy. As this promise was often repeated, I was the less anxious about any provision for myself. In a short time my uncle was taken ill, and though all possible means were made use of for his recovery, in a few days he died.

The sorrow arising from the loss of a relation, by whom I had been always treated with the

greatest kindness, however grievous, was not the worst of my misfortunes. As he enjoyed an almost uninterrupted state of health, he was the less mindful of his dissolution, and died intestate; by which means his whole fortune devolved to a nearer relation, the heir at law.

Thus excluded from all hopes of living in the manner with which I have so long flattered myself, I am doubtful what method I shall take to procure a decent maintenance. I have been educated in a manner that has set me above a state of servitude, and my situation renders me unfit for the company of those with whom I have hitherto conversed. But, though disappointed in my expectations, I do not despair. I will hope that assistance may still be obtained for innocent distress, and that friendship, though rare, is yet not impossible to be found.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

Sophia Heedful.

Nº 99. SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1760.

As *Ortogrul* of *Basra* was one day wandering along the streets of *Bagdat*, musing on the varieties of merchandise which the shops offered to his view, and observing the different occupations which busied the multitudes on every side, he was awakened from the tranquillity of meditation by a crowd that ob-

structed his passage. He raised his eyes, and saw the chief vizier, who having returned from the divan, was entering his palace.

Ortogrul mingled with the attendants, and being supposed to have some petition for the vizier, was permitted to enter. He surveyed the spaciousness of the apartments, admired the walls hung with golden tapestry, and the floors covered with silken carpets, and despised the simple neatness of his own little habitation.

Surely, said he to himself, this palace is the seat of happiness, where pleasure succeeds to pleasure, and discontent and sorrow can have no admission. Whatever Nature has provided for the delight of sense, is here spread forth to be enjoyed. What can mortals hope or imagine, which the master of this palace has not obtained? The dishes of Luxury cover his table, the voice of Harmony lulls him in his bowers; he breathes the fragrance of the groves of *Java*, and sleeps upon the down of the cygnets of *Ganges*. He speaks, and his mandate is obeyed; he wishes, and his wish is gratified; all whom he sees obey him, and all whom he hears flatter him. How different, *Ortogrul*, is thy condition, who art doomed to the perpetual torments of unsatisfied desire, and who has no amusement in thy power that can withhold thee from thy own reflections! They tell thee that thou art wise; but what does wisdom avail with poverty? None will flatter the poor, and the wise have very little power of flattering themselves. That man is surely the most wretched of the sons of wretchedness, who lives with his own faults and follies always before him, who has none to reconcile him to himself by praise and veneration. I have long sought content, and have not found it; I will from this moment endeavour to be rich.

Full of his new resolution, he shuts himself in his chamber for six months, to deliberate how he should grow rich: he sometimes proposed to offer himself as a counsellor to one of the kings of *India*, and sometimes resolved to dig for diamonds in the mines of *Golconda*. One day, after some hours passed in violent fluctuation of opinion, sleep insensibly seized him in his chair; he dreamed that he was ranging a desert country in search of some one that might teach him to grow rich; and as he stood on the top of a hill shaded with cypress, in doubt whither to direct his steps, his father appeared on a sudden standing before him. *Ortogrul*, said the old man, I know thy perplexity; listen to thy father; turn thine eye on the opposite mountain. *Ortogrul* looked, and saw a torrent tumbling down the rocks, roaring with the noise of thunder, and scattering its foam on the impending woods. Now, said his father, behold the valley that lies between the hills. *Ortogrul* looked, and espied a little well, out of which issued a small rivulet. Tell me now, said his father, dost thou wish for sudden affluence, that may pour upon thee like the mountain torrent, or for a slow and gradual increase, resembling the rill gliding from the well? Let me be quickly rich, said *Ortogrul;* let the golden stream be quick and violent. Look round thee, said his father, once again. *Ortogrul* looked, and perceived the channel of the torrent dry and dusty; but following the rivulet from the well, he traced it to a wide lake, which the supply, slow and constant, kept always full. He waked, and determined to grow rich by silent profit and persevering industry.

Having sold his patrimony, he engaged in merchandise, and in twenty years purchased lands, on which he raised a house, equal in sumptuousness to

that of the vizier, to which he invited all the ministers of pleasure, expecting to enjoy all the felicity which he had imagined riches able to afford. Leisure soon made him weary of himself, and he longed to be persuaded that he was great and happy. He was courteous and liberal; he gave all that approached him hopes of pleasing him, and all who should please him hopes of being rewarded. Every art of praise was tried, and every source of adulatory fiction was exhausted. *Ortogrul* heard his flatterers without delight, because he found himself unable to believe them. His own heart told him its frailties, his own understanding reproached him with his faults. How long, said he, with a deep sigh, have I been labouring in vain to amass wealth which at last is useless! Let no man hereafter wish to be rich, who is already too wise to be flattered.

N° 100. SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1760.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR;

THE uncertainty and defects of language have produced very frequent complaints among the learned; yet there still remain many words among us undefined, which are very necessary to be rightly understood, and which produce very mischievous mistakes when they are erroneously interpreted.

I lived in a state of celibacy beyond the usual time. In the hurry first of pleasure, and afterwards of business, I felt no want of a domestic companion; but becoming weary of labour, I soon grew more weary of idleness, and thought it reasonable to follow the custom of life, and to seek some solace of my cares in female tenderness, and some amusement of my leisure in female cheerfulness.

The choice which has been long delayed is commonly made at last with great caution. My resolution was, to keep my passions neutral, and to marry only in compliance with my reason. I drew upon a page of my pocket-book a scheme of all female virtues and vices, with the vices which border upon every virtue, and the virtues which are allied to every vice. I considered that wit was sarcastic, and magnanimity imperious; that avarice was economical, and ignorance obsequious; and having estimated the good and evil of every quality, employed my own diligence, and that of my friends, to find the lady in whom nature and reason had reached that happy mediocrity which is equally remote from exuberance and deficience.

Every woman had her admirers and her censurers; and the expectations which one raised were by another quickly depressed; yet there was one in whose favour almost all suffrages concurred. Miss *Gentle* was universally allowed to be a good sort of woman. Her fortune was not large, but so prudently managed, that she wore finer clothes, and saw more company, than many who were known to be twice as rich. Miss *Gentle*'s visits were every where welcome; and whatever family she favoured with her company, she always left behind her such a degree of kindness as recommended her to others. Every day extended her acquaintance; and all who knew

her declared that they never met with a better sort of woman.

To Miss *Gentle* I made my addresses, and was received with great equality of temper. She did not in the days of courtship assume the privilege of imposing rigorous commands, or resenting slight offences. If I forgot any of her injunctions, I was gently reminded; if I missed the minute of appointment, I was easily forgiven. I foresaw nothing in marriage but a halcyon calm, and longed for the happiness which was to be found in the inseparable society of a good sort of woman.

The jointure was soon settled by the intervention of friends, and the day came in which Miss *Gentle* was made mine for ever. The first month was passed easily enough in receiving and repaying the civilities of our friends. The bride practised with great exactness all the niceties of ceremony, and distributed her notice in the most punctilious proportions to the friends who surrounded us with their happy auguries.

But the time soon came when we were left to ourselves, and were to receive our pleasures from each other, and I then began to perceive that I was not formed to be much delighted by a good sort of woman. Her great principle is, that the orders of a family must not be broken. Every hour of the day has its employment inviolably appropriated; nor will any importunity persuade her to walk in the garden at the time which she has devoted to her needlework, or to sit up stairs in that part of the forenoon which she has accustomed herself to spend in the back parlour. She allows herself to sit half an hour after breakfast, and an hour after dinner; while I am talking or reading to her, she keeps her eye upon her watch, and when the minute of departure comes, will leave an argument unfinished, or the intrigue of

a play unravelled. She once called me to supper when I was watching an eclipse, and summoned me at another time to bed when I was going to give directions at a fire.

Her conversation is so habitually cautious, that she never talks to me but in general terms, as to one whom it is dangerous to trust. For discriminations of character she has no names: all whom she mentions are honest men and agreeable women. She smiles not by sensation, but by practice. Her laughter is never excited but by a joke, and her notion of a joke is not very delicate. The repetition of a good joke does not weaken its effect: if she has laughed once, she will laugh again.

She is an enemy to nothing but ill-nature and pride; but she has frequent reason to lament that they are so frequent in the world. All who are not equally pleased with the good and the bad, with the elegant and gross, with the witty and the dull, all who distinguish excellence from defect, she considers as ill-natured; and she condemns as proud all who repress impertinence or quell presumption, or expect respect from any other eminence than that of fortune, to which she is always willing to pay homage.

There are none whom she openly hates, for if once she suffers, or believes herself to suffer, any contempt or insult, she never dismisses it from her mind, but takes all opportunities to tell how easily she can forgive. There are none whom she loves much better than others; for when any of her acquaintance decline in the opinion of the world, she always finds it inconvenient to visit them; her affection continues unaltered, but it is impossible to be intimate with the whole town.

She daily exercises her benevolence by pitying every misfortune that happens to every family within her circle of notice; she is in hourly terrors lest one

should catch cold in the rain, and another be frighted by the high wind. Her charity she shows by lamenting that so many poor wretches should languish in the streets, and by wondering what the great can think on that they do so little good with such large estates.

Her house is elegant, and her table dainty, though she has little taste of elegance, and is wholly free from vicious luxury; but she comforts herself that nobody can say that her house is dirty, or that her dishes are not well drest.

This, Mr. *Idler*, I have found by long experience to be the character of a good sort of woman, which I have sent you for the information of those by whom a *good sort of woman*, and a *good woman*, may happen to be used as equivalent terms, and who may suffer by the mistake, like

Your humble servant,

TIM WARNER.

N° 101. SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1760.

OMAR, the son of *Hassan*, had passed seventy-five years in honour and prosperity. The favour of three successive califs had filled his house with gold and silver; and whenever he appeared, the benedictions of the people proclaimed his passage.

Terrestrial happiness is of short continuance. The brightness of the flame is wasting its fuel; the fragrant flower is passing away in its own odours.

The vigour of *Omar* began to fail, the curls of beauty fell from his head, strength departed from his hands, and agility from his feet. He gave back to the calif the keys of trust and the seals of secrecy; and sought no other pleasure for the remains of life than the converse of the wise, and the gratitude of the good.

The powers of his mind were yet unimpaired. His chamber was filled by visitants, eager to catch the dictates of experience, and officious to pay the tribute of admiration. *Caled*, the son of the viceroy of *Egypt*, entered every day early, and retired late. He was beautiful and eloquent; *Omar* admired his wit and loved his docility. Tell me, said *Caled*, thou to whose voice nations have listened, and whose wisdom is known to the extremities of *Asia*, tell me how I may resemble *Omar* the prudent. The arts by which you have gained power and preserved it, are to you no longer necessary or useful; impart to me the secret of your conduct, and teach me the plan upon which your wisdom has built your fortune.

Young man, said *Omar*, it is of little use to form plans of life. When I took my first survey of the world, in my twentieth year, having considered the various conditions of mankind, in the hour of solitude I said thus to myself, leaning against a cedar which spread its branches over my head: Seventy years are allowed to man; I have yet fifty remaining: ten years I will allot to the attainment of knowledge, and ten I will pass in foreign countries; I shall be learned, and therefore shall be honoured; every city will shout at my arrival, and every student will solicit my friendship. Twenty years thus passed will store my mind with images which I shall be busy through the rest of my life in combining and comparing. I shall revel in inexhaustible accumulations of intellectual riches; I shall find new plea-

sures for every moment, and shall never more be weary of myself. I will, however, not deviate too far from the beaten track of life, but will try what can be found in female delicacy. I will marry a wife beautiful as the *Houries*, and wise as *Zobeide;* with her I will live twenty years within the suburbs of *Bagdat*, in every pleasure that wealth can purchase, and fancy can invent. I will then retire to a rural dwelling, pass my last days in obscurity and contemplation, and lie silently down on the bed of death. Through my life it shall be my settled resolution, that I will never depend upon the smile of princes; that I will never stand exposed to the artifices of courts; I will never pant for public honours, nor disturb my quiet with affairs of state. Such was my scheme of life, which I impressed indelibly upon my memory.

The first part of my ensuing time was to be spent in search of knowledge; and I know not how I was diverted from my design. I had no visible impediments without, nor any ungovernable passions within. I regarded knowledge as the highest honour and the most engaging pleasure; yet day stole upon day, and month glided after month, till I found that seven years of the first ten had vanished, and left nothing behind them. I now postponed my purpose of travelling; for why should I go abroad while so much remained to be learned at home? I immured myself for four years, and studied the laws of the empire. The fame of my skill reached the judges; I was found able to speak upon doubtful questions, and was commanded to stand at the footstool of the calif. I was heard with attention, I was consulted with confidence, and the love of praise fastened on my heart.

I still wished to see distant countries, listened with rapture to the relations of travellers, and resolved

some time to ask my dismission, that I might feast my soul with novelty; but my presence was always necessary, and the stream of business hurried me along. Sometimes I was afraid lest I should be charged with ingratitude; but I still proposed to travel, and therefore would not confine myself by marriage.

In my fiftieth year I began to suspect that the time of travelling was past, and thought it best to lay hold on the felicity yet in my power, and indulge myself in domestic pleasures. But at fifty no man easily finds a woman beautiful as the *Houries*, and wise as *Zobeide*. I inquired and rejected, consulted and deliberated, till the sixty-second year made me ashamed of gazing upon girls. I had now nothing left but retirement, and for retirement I never found a time, till disease forced me from public employment.

Such was my scheme, and such has been its consequence. With an insatiable thirst for knowledge, I trifled away the years of improvement; with a restless desire of seeing different countries, I have always resided in the same city; with the highest expectation of connubial felicity, I have lived unmarried; and with unalterable resolutions of contemplative retirement, I am going to die within the walls of *Bagdat*.

N° 102. SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1760.

It very seldom happens to man that his business is his pleasure. What is done from necessity is so often to be done when against the present inclination, and so often fills the mind with anxiety, that an habitual dislike steals upon us, and we shrink involuntarily from the remembrance of our task. This is the reason why almost every one wishes to quit his employment; he does not like another state, but is disgusted with his own.

From this unwillingness to perform more than is required of that which is commonly performed with reluctance, it proceeds that few authors write their own lives. Statesmen, courtiers, ladies, generals, and seamen, have given to the world their own stories, and the events with which their different stations have made them acquainted. They retired to the closet as to a place of quiet and amusement, and pleased themselves with writing, because they could lay down the pen whenever they were weary. But the author, however conspicuous, or however important, either in the public eye or in his own, leaves his life to be related by his successors, for he cannot gratify his vanity but by sacrificing his ease.

It is commonly supposed that the uniformity of a studious life affords no matter for narration: but the truth is, that of the most studious life a great part passes without study. An author partakes of the common condition of humanity; he is born and married like another man; he has hopes

and fears, expectations and disappointments, griefs and joys, and friends and enemies, like a courtier or a statesman; nor can I conceive why his affairs should not excite curiosity as much as the whisper of a drawing-room, or the factions of a camp.

Nothing detains the reader's attention more powerfully than deep involutions of distress, or sudden vicissitudes of fortune; and these might be abundantly afforded by memoirs of the sons of literature. They are intangled by contracts which they know not how to fulfil, and obliged to write on subjects which they do not understand. Every publication is a new period of time, from which some increase or declension of fame is to be reckoned. The gradations of a hero's life are from battle to battle, and of an author's from book to book.

Success and miscarriage have the same effects in all conditions. The prosperous are feared, hated, and flattered; and the unfortunate avoided, pitied, and despised. No sooner is a book published than the writer may judge of the opinion of the world. If his acquaintance press round him in public places, or salute him from the other side of the street; if invitations to dinner come thick upon him, and those with whom he dines keep him to supper; if the ladies turn to him when his coat is plain, and the footmen serve him with attention and alacrity; he may be sure that his work has been praised by some leader of literary fashions.

Of declining reputation the symptoms are not less easily observed. If the author enters a coffee-house, he has a box to himself; if he calls at a bookseller's, the boy turns his back; and, what is the most fatal of all prognostics, authors will visit him in a morning, and talk to him hour after hour of the malevolence of critics, the neglect of me-

rit, the bad taste of the age, and the candour of posterity.

All this, modified and varied by accident and custom, would form very amusing scenes of biography, and might recreate many a mind which is very little delighted with conspiracies or battles, intrigues of a court, or debates of a parliament; to this might be added all the changes of the countenance of a patron, traced from the first glow which flattery raises in his cheek, through ardour of fondness, vehemence of promise, magnificence of praise, excuse of delay, and lamentation of inability, to the last chill look of final dismission, when the one grows weary of soliciting, and the other of hearing solicitation.

Thus copious are the materials which have been hitherto suffered to lie neglected, while the repositories of every family that has produced a soldier or a minister are ransacked, and libraries are crowded with useless folios of state papers which will never be read, and which contribute nothing to valuable knowledge.

I hope the learned will be taught to know their own strength and their value, and, instead of devoting their lives to the honour of those who seldom thank them for their labours, resolve at last to do justice to themselves.

N° 103. SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 1760.

Respicere ad longæ jussit spatia ultima vitæ.

JUV.

MUCH of the pain and pleasure of mankind arises from the conjectures which every one makes of the thoughts of others; we all enjoy praise which we do not hear, and resent contempt which we do not see. The *Idler* may therefore be forgiven, if he suffers his imagination to represent to him what his readers will say or think when they are informed that they have now his last paper in their hands.

Value is more frequently raised by scarcity than by use. That which lay neglected when it was common, rises in estimation as its quantity becomes less. We seldom learn the true want of what we have, till it is discovered that we can have no more.

This essay will, perhaps, be read with care even by those who have not yet attended to any other; and he that finds this late attention recompensed, will not forbear to wish that he had bestowed it sooner.

Though the *Idler* and his readers have contracted no close friendship, they are perhaps both unwilling to part. There are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last.* Those who never could agree together, shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the

Idler, with all his chillness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is now before him.

This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done any thing for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more are past there are less remaining.

It is very happily and kindly provided, that in every life there are certain pauses and interruptions, which force consideration upon the careless, and seriousness upon the light; points of time where one course of action ends, and another begins; and by vicissitudes of fortune, or alteration of employment, by change of place or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, *this is the last.*

An even and unvaried tenour of life always hides from our apprehension the approach of its end. Succession is not perceived but by variation; he that lives to-day as he lived yesterday, and expects that as the present day is, such will be the morrow, easily conceives time as running in a circle and returning to itself. The uncertainty of our duration is impressed commonly by dissimilitude of condition; it is only by finding life changeable that we are reminded of its shortness.

This conviction, however forcible at every new impression, is every moment fading from the mind; and partly by the inevitable incursion of new images, and partly by voluntary exclusion of unwelcome thoughts, we are again exposed to the universal fallacy; and we must do another thing for the last time, before we consider that the time is nigh when we shall do no more.

As the last Idler is published in that solemn week which the Christian world has always set apart for the examination of the conscience, the review of life, the extinction of earthly desires, and the renovation of holy purposes; I hope that my readers are already disposed to view every incident with seriousness, and improve it by meditation; and that when they see this series of trifles brought to a conclusion, they will consider that, by outliving the *Idler*, they have passed weeks, months, and years, which are now no longer in their power; that an end must in time be put to every thing great as to every thing little; that to life must come its last hour, and to this system of being its last day, the hour at which probation ceases, and repentance will be vain; the day in which every work of the hand, and imagination of the heart shall be brought to judgment, and an everlasting futurity shall be determined by the past.

N° XXII.*

MANY naturalists are of opinion, that the animals which we commonly consider as mute, have the power of imparting their thoughts to one another. That they can express general sensations is very certain: every being that can utter sounds, has a different voice for pleasure and for pain. The hound

* This was the original No. 22, but on the republication of the work in volumes, Dr. Johnson substituted what now stands under that head.

informs his fellows when he scents his game: the hen calls her chickens to their food by her cluck, and drives them from danger by her scream.

Birds have the greatest variety of notes; they have indeed a variety, which seems almost sufficient to make a speech adequate to the purposes of a life, which is regulated by instinct, and can admit little change or improvement. To the cries of birds curiosity or superstition has been always attentive; many have studied the language of the feathered tribes, and some have boasted that they understood it.

The most skilful or most confident interpreters of the sylvan dialogues, have been commonly found among the philosophers of the east, in a country where the calmness of the air, and the mildness of the seasons, allow the student to pass a great part of the year in groves and bowers. But what may be done in one place by peculiar opportunities, may be performed in another by peculiar diligence. A shepherd of *Bohemia* has, by long abode in the forests, enabled himself to understand the voice of birds; at least he relates with great confidence a story, of which the credibility is left to be considered by the learned.

As I was sitting (said he) within a hollow rock, and watching my sheep that fed in the valley, I heard two vultures interchangeably crying on the summit of a cliff. Both voices were earnest and deliberate. My curiosity prevailed over the care of the flock; I climbed slowly and silently from crag to crag, concealed among the shrubs, till I found a cavity where I might sit and listen without suffering, or giving disturbance.

I soon perceived that my labour would be well repaid, for an old vulture was sitting on a naked prominence, with her young about her, whom she was

instructing in the arts of a vulture's life, and preparing, by the last lecture, for their final dismission to the mountains and the skies.

My children, said the old vulture, you will the less want my instructions, because you have had my practice before your eyes; you have seen me snatch from the farm the household fowl, you have seen me seize the leveret in the bush, and the kid in the pasture; you know how to fix your talons, and how to balance your flight when you are laden with your prey. But you remember the taste of more delicious food. I have often regaled you with the flesh of man. Tell us, said the young vultures, where man may be found, and how he may be known; his flesh is surely the natural food of a vulture. Why have you never brought a man in your talons to the nest? He is too bulky, said the mother; when we find a man we can only tear away his flesh, and leave his bones upon the ground. Since man is so big, said the young ones, how do you kill him? You are afraid of the wolf and of the bear, by what power are vultures superior to man? Is man more defenceless than a sheep? We have not the strength of man, returned the mother, and I am sometimes in doubt whether we have the subtilty; and the vultures would seldom feast upon his flesh, had not nature, that devoted him to our uses, infused into him a strange ferocity, which I have never observed in any other being that feeds upon the earth. Two herds of men will often meet and shake the earth with noise, and fill the earth with fire. When you hear noise, and see fire, with flashes along the ground, hasten to the place with your swiftest wing, for men are surely destroying one another; you will then find the ground smoking with blood, and covered with carcases, of which many are dismembered, and mangled for the convenience of the vulture. But

when men have killed their prey, said the pupil, why do they not eat it? When the wolf has killed a sheep, he suffers not the vulture to touch it till he has satisfied himself. Is not man another kind of wolf? Man, said the mother, is the only beast who kills that which he does not devour, and this quality makes him so much a benefactor to our species. If men kill our prey, and lay it in our way, said the young one, what need shall we have of labouring for ourselves? Because man will, sometimes, replied the mother, remain for a long time quiet in his den. The old vultures will tell you when you are to watch his motions. When you see men in great numbers moving close together, like a flight of storks, you may conclude that they are hunting, and that you will soon revel in human blood. But still, said the young one, I would gladly know the reason of this mutual slaughter. I could never kill what I could not eat. My child, said the mother, this is a question which I cannot answer, though I am reckoned the most subtile bird of the mountain. When I was young, I used frequently to visit the ayry of an old vulture, who dwelt upon the *Carpathian* rocks; he had made many observations; he knew the places that afforded prey round his habitation, as far in every direction as the strongest wing can fly between the rising and setting of the summer sun; he had fed year after year on the entrails of men. His opinion was, that men had only the appearance of animal life, being really vegetables with a power of motion; and that as the boughs of an oak are dashed together by the storm, that swine may fatten upon the fallen acorns, so men are by some unaccountable power driven one against another, till they lose their motion, that vultures may be fed. Others think they have observed something of contrivance and policy among these mischievous beings: and those

that hover more closely round them, pretend, that there is, in every herd, one that gives directions to the rest, and seems to be more eminently delighted with a wide carnage. What it is that entitles him to such pre-eminence we know not; he is seldom the biggest or the swiftest, but he shows by his eagerness and diligence that he is, more than any of the others, a friend to the vultures.

END OF VOL. THIRTY-THREE.

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